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Etc., Etc.

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Mrs. Hilton goes down two steps after him, the spear held down at the charge.



Eight Days

*A Tale of the
Indian Mutiny*

R. E. FORREST

Thomas Nelson and
Sons, London, Edin-
burgh, and New York



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EIGHT DAYS.

INTRODUCTION.

THIS is a tale of the Indian Mutiny. The eight days are those extending from the 8th to the 15th, both inclusive, of the month of May in the year 1857, the year in which that "devil's wind," as the people of the land themselves most appropriately term it, arose and blew with most destructive violence.

That year had dawned gloriously on British India. Its January sun looked down on a splendid dominion, apparently most securely established. By the conquest of the Punjâb the East India Company had extended its sway to the farthest western limits of the great peninsula. It was now supreme and rivalless throughout the length and breadth of India. The splendid consulship of the Marquis of Dalhousie had just come to a close. It had been made illustrious by the triumphs of peace and of war. Great victories had been won, new kingdoms conquered, great public works undertaken, great administrative measures introduced. The new Governor-General, Lord Canning, had begun his reign under the happiest auspices.

Then a little cloud appeared in the bright sky. The 19th Regiment of Native Infantry, quartered in Bengal, not very far from Calcutta, mutinied. The rifle was

now being introduced into the native army, and with it came a new cartridge. The weapon was still a muzzle-loader, the top of the cartridge had still to be bitten off as before, and the rumour had got abroad that the new cartridge was lubricated with a composition containing the fat of cows and pigs. How could the sepoy put his lips to that? No explanations or assurances sufficed to pacify him or satisfy him. No; it was a deliberate plot against his religion and caste. He refused to use the new weapon. The regiment had to be disbanded. This was in the last week of February. In the last week of March took place a similar refusal on the part of another regiment lying in the immediate vicinity of Calcutta, and then came the first shedding of blood, English and native. The spirit of mutiny displayed itself next a thousand miles away—showing how quick was the intercommunication among the men—at the great military station of Umballa. Incendiarism was soon rife there; the torch, the weapon of discontent, in active play.

Umballa lies a hundred miles to the northward of Delhi; between the two stretches the flat, open track which separates the great water-system of the Punjab, on the one side, from the greater water-system of the Gangetic valley on the other, and which has formed the historic battlefield of India. For Umballa lies under the shadow of the great Northern Himalayan wall, while southward from Delhi, down to the ocean, stretches the great western desert. This tract thus forms the gateway, the easy portal, the open gateway, into India. Over it have flowed all the great tides of immigration, peaceful or hostile. At its southern extremity, not far from where the desert begins, the Jumna receives its first affluent, and this was the highest point of navigation of the fertile Gangetic valley, a thousand miles long, and in the olden days the rivers formed the great highways of the land. Here was the point where the products of the rich plains of Northern India and Bengal could be exchanged for those of Western Asia; and at this

very point an outlying ridge of a chain of hills that goes straggling across the western desert, impinged on the sacred river, afforded a height on which to set a fortress and the material with which to build it. (Most great cities—Thebes, Athens, Rome, Jerusalem—have risen on quarries.) Here was the site for a great city, and here stood Delhi; here from fifteen centuries before the Christian era had stood the successive capitals of India, and the ruins of the older ones now cover a vast area of ground.

Then in the last week of April the men of the 3rd Regiment of Regular Cavalry, quartered at Abdoolapore, another very large military station situated sixty miles to the eastward of Umballa, but on the other side of the Jumna, had refused to go through their carbine drill, refused to touch the cartridges actually in use. Men looked grave at this. Here was no new weapon, no new cartridge. The cloud was indeed widening and throwing a darker shadow. The Government had done its best to allay the fear, real or pretended, so fearful to itself. It had issued manifesto after manifesto; there was nothing objectionable now in the lubricating material of the new cartridges: the sepoy refused to believe it. This was mortifying; but let the sepoy then have the cartridge plain, and dip it in wax and oil himself: whereupon the sepoy said the paper was tainted. Then the Government had the paper analyzed—a thoroughly English idea; and then the sepoy laughed—the analysis had been made by a servant of the Government, by a Christian, an Englishman. What was to be done? The shadow was growing broader and darker. Mohammedan was joining with Hindu. The cavalry regiments were composed chiefly of Mohammedans, as the infantry regiments were of Hindus. If the Hindu sepoy and the Mohammedan trooper put their hands behind their backs and refused to use their weapons, what had become of the Bengal army?

The result of the trial of the mutineers—as they were called on the one side, heroes on the other—is now being

awaited with great anxiety. It is to be promulgated at Abdoolapore to-morrow.

Khizrabad, the principal scene of the events we have to deal with in our eight days' tale, lies forty miles south-west from Abdoolapore; it stands in immediate contiguity to Delhi, derives its importance from the same causes, and has a similar history. We have now to describe the main features of this ancient and famous city. They had a great influence on the course of the events we have to chronicle. To do so at once will save any break in the run of the narrative. Let the reader bear them in mind.

The circumvallation of Khizrabad presents a five-sided figure, of which one, the eastern, side extends along the bank of the river Jumna; the two sides running back inland from the ends of this eastern face form the north face and the south face, and the two walls joining the ends of these north and south faces make up the western face. About a mile from this western face lies a rocky ridge, which runs almost parallel to it. Beyond the ridge stands the English cantonment, the dwelling-place of the latest conquering race, so different from the dwelling-place of any conquering race that has preceded it. The red sandstone battlements of the enclosed city were very lofty, as some of those whose adventures I have to follow were to find to their cost; the ditch below was very deep, and its sides very steep, of which also they were to have uncomfortable personal proof.

These high walls, with their Pathan parapets, and honeycomb machicolations, and lofty gateways, and massive bastions, presented a very lordly and picturesque outline. On the wall running along the Jumna bank rested an interior palace-fortress, with still loftier battlements, and a still deeper ditch, whose sides were faced with stone, and yet more magnificent gateways. Within it rose the far-famed palace chambers of the Nuwâbs of Khizrabad, a once wealthy and powerful race, ruling over a wide dominion, the fame of whose pomp and magnificence had once resounded through all

the world. Opposite the palace-fortress, and forming the centre of the city, rose a great mosque, whose lofty, slender minarets were visible from many a league around. In each of the five faces of the town was a gateway known by the name of some city or country towards which the road passing through it led—as the Agra Gate, the Jumoo Gate, the Ajmere Gate; and also by some complimentary epithet, as the Splendid Gate, the Magnificent Gate, the Gate Beautiful. The gateways of the palace-fortress were very fine specimens of their class—a class in which the large-handed style of architecture of the Mohammedans has found such fitting display. They had one peculiar feature. Along their summit, above the lofty demi-vaults, between the lofty flanking towers, extended a row of marble cupolas resting on slender sandstone columns. In the soft early morning light, when everything else was dim and indistinct, these white cupolas stood out like little heaps of snow. They caught the eye high up in the air. They looked like a row of pearls. They lent a sudden aerial grace to the massive structure below.

In a line with the chief of these gateways lay the main street of the town, named Star Street, in order to give expression to the sense of its excessive brightness, of its sparkling beauty. In it were to be found congregated the shops of the superior classes of tradesmen, whom the ancient splendour of the Court of Khizrabad had brought into the city in such numbers—the diamond merchants, and the shawl merchants, and the dealers in cloth of gold; and the shops of the higher classes of handicraftsmen—the goldsmiths, and the silversmiths, and the workers in enamel, and the miniature-painters who have preserved to us the faces of the celebrated men and women of the East—of Akbar, of Roshunârâ Begum, of Shah Jehan, and of Sheikh Sâdi of Shiraz; here were to be seen the gay, tinsel-covered skullcaps of muslin or bright silk for the men, the gold-embroidered, spangle-covered petticoats and trousers for the women; here were shops full of bright-coloured paper kites;

shops full of bright soft muslins, and the chintzes on which the same patterns have been imprinted for thousands of years; here were to be seen the gleaming braziers' shops.

The streets did not spread evenly on either side of this main one. The southern half of the city was the more densely populated; it was closely covered with streets and squares and alleys right up to the walls. But in the northern half were more open spaces—encamping grounds, caravanserais, detached mansions; gardens, royal and private; public buildings, with large enclosures, such as the Royal Filkhana, or “elephant-house,” and the Royal Topkhana, or “gun-house”—that is, arsenal. This division of the city had an important bearing on the events we have to chronicle. In India we English people do not usually dwell within the walled cities of the land. The mode of life of the natives is too different from ours to allow of it. We live *by* Agra or Lahore, not *in* them. We occupy that conquered land in open villas—a curious fact. But when we first obtained possession of Delhi, and of contiguous Khizrabad with it, those cities stood on the extreme boundary of our new dominions. Beyond lay foreign territory. Around was a lawless region, for the sceptre of the Nuwâbs of Khizrabad had long since lost its power, and become a symbol not of law and order, but of lawlessness and disorder. In the vicinity were predatory States; along the banks of the Jumna lay lawless tribes—lawless always, as even at this present day under our own strong rule; and the great western desert afforded facilities for the movements of organized bands of robbers. Thus, then, on our first occupation of Khizrabad, the usual arrangement of placing the military lines, or cantonment, and the civil lines, which together make up the Indian “station,” by the side of the native town, had been departed from. The cantonment had been so placed; but it had been thought more advisable, since the open spaces in the north side of the town afforded the means of doing so, to place our

Court Houses and Record Office and Treasury, and the other usual public offices and buildings, within the safe enclosure of the city walls. And so the civil employes, especially those of the subordinate rank, built their houses here too. There, too, rose up the public hospital, and the post-office, and the Government college, and the church. Many of the old buildings, public and private, had come into our hands, and could be put to new uses. The Judge's Court was in one of them, the Magistrate's office in another. The old Royal Topkhana, or arsenal, was kept to its original use, and became our magazine. This led to the dwelling within the city walls of the military men, the commissioned and non-commissioned officers, connected with this establishment. Then the members of the commercial classes, such few of them as there were, naturally took up their abode within the city walls too. Here the English general dealer and the English chemist had their shops. Here stood the Khizrabad bank. So came about in this ancient Mohammedan city the unusual circumstance of a large English community dwelling within its walls. Its north end had become a well-filled English quarter.

Like all great cities, all great capitals, Khizrabad had its fair and foul, its black and white, its heights and depths, in sharpest contrast. To it had flowed all that was worst in the State, as well as all that was best. If the stream of national life rose here in highest, brightest fountains, it also lay here in lowest, blackest pools. If the city had its bright, gay squares and brilliant boulevards, it also had its foul back slums and noisome alleys. Its Alsatia was as renowned as its Star Street. That evil renown had grown to a great height in the later years of the Khizrabad sovereignty, during the period of its decay, when the virtues which had established the royal house of Khizrabad had left it ; when indolence and folly and vice had taken the place of energy and wisdom ; when the profligacy of the Court had become flagrant and flagitious ; when, more than ever, the worst ele-

ments in the State flowed into its metropolis. Then to it, more than ever, came the vicious and the violent, the lewd and the lawless. Then to it flocked the unworthy, and not the worthy. Then to it ran the pander and the pimp, the cheat and the sharper, the cutthroat and the strangler, the poisoner and the thief, the thug, the thimble-rigger, the dacoit. And that foul cesspool was still malodorous, high and full. When we had deprived the Nuwâbs of Khizrabad of their political power, we had still left them their nominal sovereignty. We had secured them an income which was smaller, of course, than the royal revenues of their earlier ancestors, but which was much larger than the income any of their more immediate predecessors had been able to command. They were still kings within the limit of their palace-fortress. And so there still continued to be in Khizrabad a licentious Court, dissolute and extravagant young princes, spendthrift and profligate young nobles. She was still the gay metropolis, the city of pleasure. And if no longer as domineering or secure as before, her Alsatia, her Sheitanpara, or "Devil's Quarter," was still as full as ever. There was no lack of the devil's children in it, as will be shown in a day or two when it pours forth its ruffianry.

CHAPTER I.

THE BRIDESMAIDS.

OUR story begins, then, on Friday, the 8th of May, in the year of our Lord 1857, with the firing of the gun placed by the side of the Flagstaff Tower on the ridge. This piece proclaims with loud voice three times a day the present dominion of the English. The chant of the muezzin floats forth from the aerial height of one of the soaring minarets of the Great Mosque, proud monument of the Mohammedan dominion, which may be said to subsist even now, for a descendant of the Great Moguls sits on the throne of his ancestors ; the King of Delhi is still King of Delhi. And the bellowing of shells and the tinkling of gongs come forth from the temples of the Hindus, who still hold independent sway over a great portion of the land in which they, not very long before, very nearly re-established their ancient supremacy in the person of the Mahrattas, who then held the King of Delhi in thrall, as the English do now.

Sweet the sound of English church bells, strange the moaning of the Hindu conch-shell, mellow the vibration of the disk of metal sonorous of the great Burmese gong ; but of all such sounds the finest is the voice of the high-placed muezzin loudly proclaiming the greatness of God : "Allah-ho-Akber !"—"Allah-ho-Akber !"

The firing of the gun is the signal for awakening and movement, though the sun will not appear for a long time yet. Early rising is the rule in India, especially

at this season of the year. Now do the English people hurry forth to take the morning air, to make the most of the cool, fresh morning hours. Some ride, some drive—every one possesses a horse or a vehicle of some kind. This is the active time of the day. Every one is now out of doors, for business, exercise, or pleasure. The doctors visit their hospitals, the engineers their roads or bridges. The little white-faced children are sent out with their bearers and ayahs.

One of the favourite places of resort in Khizrabad in the morning-time at this season of the year was the Ghilâni Bâgh, the large public garden which lay within the city walls, and between the city proper and the English quarter. Here, before the sun had risen, was to be found a cool, delicious freshness, and afterwards broad spaces of cool, dark shade. Here were to be found what most the heart longed for in this burning month of May—coolness, greenery, shade. And so of a morning you were sure to see here most of the prominent English people of the place. Now Mr. Melvil, the Commissioner, the highest civil functionary, the local representative of the English Government, drives his four-in-hand through it, or rides through it on one of his splendid Arab horses. Or old, gray-haired Brigadier Moss, the highest military functionary, the Brigadier in command of the station, will drive slowly through it in his big barouche, with old Mrs. Moss by his side. Fat, plethoric old Colonel Barnes, who commands the 69th Regiment of Native Infantry, one of the three regiments quartered in Khizrabad, will linger long in it, and enjoy its cool air to the last, even up to eight o'clock. Little wiry Major Coote, who is just now in temporary command of the 79th N.I., another regiment here, makes it the terminus of his walk—he is one of the very few who walk. And here on most days of the week, this not being the season for parades, are to be seen the bright, handsome face and neat, well-cut little figure of Colonel Grey, C.B., a very rising officer, who commands the 3rd N.I., the Grenadiers, our remaining regiment. Old

Dr. Campbell, the Civil Surgeon, widely known as Jock Campbell, who has been here for twenty-five years, passes through on his way to his jail or his dispensary. Major Fane, the "Commissary of Ordnance"—that is, the officer in charge of the arsenal—is to be seen here every morning, for he has charge of the Gardens. In India men have charge of many things—play many parts. And here quite as regularly—for he lives in the Bank House, and that adjoins the Gardens—is to be seen Mr. Hilton, the manager of the Khizrabad Bank, with his military look and bearing; he was once in the army. And here, almost as regularly, is to be seen the Reverend Mr. Wynn, the military chaplain. He is sure to attract your attention, there is about his look and bearing so distinctive an air of birth and breeding, of refinement; there is on his handsome, finely-featured, intellectual face so lofty and elevated a look, so ethereal and spiritual a look, as if there were already upon it a touch of that heaven towards which he pointed and led the way.

The favourite spot in the garden was that where the watercourse, which ran through it and gave it its fertility, enabling it to present even in the hot weather the rare and delightful phenomenon of broad stretches of green grass, and which, taken off from the Jumna at the point where it issues from the Himalayas, sixty miles higher up, rejoins it here below the city walls—the favourite spot was that where this watercourse made a graceful sweep through the "little wood" of a magnificent ancient banian tree. The curve was very graceful; there was here a beautiful intermingling of various-shaped and various-coloured foliage; the sight of the water very pleasant. The glare-weary eyes rested on the grass slopes of the watercourse as a tired sleeper on a bed of down. Here were coolness, greenery, shade.

This morning the place is additionally beautified by the presence of a group of pretty English girls. Before talking of them, however, it is necessary to say a few words more concerning the spot itself. When that old

tree was young, and stood a single, solitary stem, a great forest extended around it. Then came cleared spaces and the habitations of men. The years went by, and it grew and flourished, and extended itself, and the single stem became the centre of many. Then the walls of a great city rose up around it, but the tree was left untouched, protected by its sacred character, by its usefulness and beauty. And in the city as in the forest there was often around the banian a great hacking and hewing, not of trees, but of men; and it is about to witness such a hacking again in a day or two. Then once more it had the companionship of its kind, and other trees grew up by its side and around it, for it came to form a part of the park and garden which the Nuwâb Abd-ul-Rahman Ghilâni, a Persian adventurer, who had risen to be Vizier, had placed around the palatial mansion he had erected for himself. Cultured Mohammedan noblemen quoted Hafiz and Sâdi in the shade in which the Hindus had performed their idolatrous rites and the tired aboriginal hunter had laid him down to rest. The years rolled on so. Then came a change. The Christian took the place of the Mohammedan. Governors and Lieutenant-Governors took the place of Viziers and Nizams; Malcolms and Munros of Saadut Alis and Bahadur Khans; the East India Company of the Great Mogul. The tree had cast its narrow shade over the rude aboriginal hunter, and its broader shade over the sturdy Hindu ploughmen and pretty slips of Hindu womankind; and then its still broader shade over the polished Persian and the stout Afghan and beauties from Cashmere; and now in its amplest shade, no more to be expanded, sit these fair daughters of the distant isle from which have come the latest conquerors of the land, these pretty, laughing English girls. It is with the fortunes of these girls during the coming eight days that we have chiefly to deal. But before speaking of them one other peculiarity of the spot has to be noted. At a certain hour every day the shadow of the topmost pinnacle of one of the minarets of the mosque just

reached to it and passed over it, thus tracing out the passage of time with a ghostly finger.

It was quite a large group of girls. There were all kinds of pretty eyes—blue, brown, and gray—every kind of pretty mouth, and nose, and cheek, and chin. Every face was fair, and had on it a sweet expression. On no one face was the expression disagreeable, bold, or shrewish, or peevish, or silly, but on all bright and sweet and kindly. On all was a frank, open, honest look, the clear, bright look of good, sound health; on all the bloom of youth, the first sweet touch of womanhood. There was on them all the brightness of happiness and content. They all had happy homes; fond, proud parents, of whom they too were fond and proud. They were freed from the social jealousies which so much embitter life in England. They formed part of the highest social class in the land; they belonged to the ruling race. (It is wonderful how much satisfaction that last can confer.) Their homes were not overshadowed by any pecuniary cares. They enjoyed all the advantages of wealth. They shared in a large and liberal mode of living. They had all the material adjuncts of happiness. They lived in large and well-furnished houses; had crowds of servants to wait on them. They had pretty dresses, carriages to drive in, horses to ride, books, music, a large circle of friends. They had plenty of amusement; they were made much of. The pathway of life lay before them very bright and shining.

The girl with the golden hair and sweet blue eyes, the delicate, aquiline nose, and the lovely mouth is Beatrice Fane. Her beautiful countenance is an index to her beautiful character—mild, gentle, saintlike. She is a very daughter of the gods, divinely tall and most divinely fair; she is standing at one end of the garden seat, and her close-fitting riding-habit displays the beautiful outlines of her tall, slender figure to perfection.

Against the other end of the seat leans a young girl, one whose feet have only just reached the borderland

where girlhood and womanhood meet. She is the very rosebud of that rosebud garden of girls. She has laughing blue eyes and a laughing red mouth. Her pretty cheeks are red, and her nose a little turned up. You would hardly take her to be Beatrice Fane's sister, but she is. This is Lilian Fane—sweet, merry, laughing Lilian Fane !

There are two girls seated on the bench. The one seated next the arm of it by which Beatrice Fane stands is Agnes Hilton. The doves and pigeons that circle round the heads of so many heroines of romance would not have served her for cognizance, but rather the falcon, strong of wing, fearless of eye. Her straight-looking, clear gray eyes express an absolute fearlessness. She has a beautifully-formed, short, straight nose. Her upper lip is very short, and her mouth, if very firm set, is outlined in beautiful curves. She has rather a page-boy look. Her figure is light, graceful, strong ; she looks splendid, where she loves best to be, on horse-back. She is also in a riding-habit. Mark how uprightly she sits.

On the other side of the pathway running along the bank of the watercourse stands Agnes Hilton's elder sister Maud, also in a riding-habit. Her figure is more full than that of the others, broader shoulders, larger waist. The face also is of a broader type. The low, wide, upright forehead, the straight nose running down in a line with it, the full but exquisitely-chiselled lips are of the Grecian type. But it is not of the features that you think as you gaze intently, as perforce you must, on Maud Hilton's face, but of the expression. How impassive !—no, how calm and still !—no, how full of restraint and self-command ! A passionate nature with a passionate self-control—that is your surmise, your reading, what is borne in upon you. Life to her cannot be level and flat, but all depths and heights. She will feel her joys and sorrows keenly ; but she will not show the former, and will let the latter tear at her heart unseen. Her feelings of every kind will be intensified by

this inward repression. The air of command on the firm, upright brow, the proud set of the lips, the intense look in the beautiful brown eyes, of which at first you note only the velvety softness, are full of strength—strength of intellect, strength of passion, strength of will. Something is said ; she speaks—on the lips and in the eyes is a mixture of playfulness and tenderness and pathos ; she ceases to speak, and the face becomes firm and hard again.

The other girl on the bench is May Wynn. She has not the great beauty of feature of some of the other girls there—Beatrice Fane, for instance—but to many her face would have seemed the most attractive ; it combined in itself so many of the excellences of expression of the others—intelligence, kindness, gentleness, sweetness, steadfastness. She is not the oldest there, but she has the most womanly look ; she has had that look almost from a child ; her nature is intensely womanly. Every one of these girls has that excellent thing in woman, a soft voice ; each one a good bearing and good manners ; but May Wynn's voice is the sweetest, her bearing the most graceful, her manner the most winning. As the frequent laugh goes round you observe that they all enjoy the advantage of very good teeth also.

Such is the group of girls—a large one for the India of those days. They are all very young. Maud Hilton, the oldest, is only twenty ; Beatrice Fane is nineteen ; Lilian Fane sixteen ; Agnes Hilton is eighteen ; and May Wynn is eighteen too.

This is a favourite place of resort, but the girls have met here this morning not accidentally, but by appointment. They are met in council ; they are met to discuss a very important matter. Beatrice Fane is about to be married, and the other girls are to be her bridesmaids, and they have come together to settle what their dresses are to be—the marriage is now very near.

“ I was thinking,” says Beatrice, “ that your dresses might be of cream-coloured muslin trimmed with *écru*

lace—deep, you know ! Leghorn hats, or a coiffure of cream-coloured plush, trimmed with écru lace of a deep shade.”

They discuss this.

“ Or what do you think of Korah silk dresses, trimmed with yellow velvet ribbon, and the same hats ? ”

“ No ; tulle bonnets, with yellow and white marguerites,” calls out Lilian excitedly from the other end of the bench, on the arm of which she has now perched herself, and is dangling her legs to and fro.

They discuss that.

“ Or what do you think of white French gauze trimmed with lace and white watered silk, with tulle veils fastened with pink feathers ? ”

“ Too elaborate,” says Agnes Hilton, who has a short and decisive mode of speech.

“ And would they not be very expensive ? ” cries May Wynn, the housekeeper. She keeps house for her father, the Reverend Mr. Wynn already mentioned, whose income—or pay, as they call it in India—is not by any means so large as that of Major Fane or Mr. Hilton, the fathers of the other girls.

“ The bride alone should have a veil ; it is the distinctive portion of her dress,” says Maud Hilton.

Then Beatrice makes other proposals, and there is more discussion. Finally, as so often happens, the dress first proposed is the one finally fixed on, subject, of course, to the approval of the mothers, Mrs. Fane and Mrs. Hilton. May Wynn has no mother.

Japanese sentinels at Windsor Castle or Buckingham Palace ; Japanese judges in the Law Courts ; Japanese young gentlemen settling the differences between Scottish or Irish landlords and their tenants, and fixing the rent-rolls of the Duke of Argyll or the Marquis of Clanricarde—all this might seem strange to us. But English soldiers keeping guard in the palaces of Akbar and Shah Jehan ; young English officers making a “ settlement ” of vast estates ; English “ Residents ” guiding and controlling monarchs, Rajahs and Maharajahs and Nizams—all this

does not seem strange to us. It is very curious to see how quietly the young English lad will settle down to his work—the work of ruling India—as if there was nothing extraordinary in it, nothing extraordinary in his little finger being thicker than the waists of nobles and princes, of Rajahs and Nuwâbs. So the fact of a group of English girls discussing details of dress in the heart of a great Mohammedan city, and in the shadow of the sacred fig-tree of the Hindus, would not have seemed strange to any of the English residents of Khizrabad. The Mohammedans, perhaps, had their own thoughts on the matter.

“In July—you have not fixed the exact date yet?” says one.

“No; not yet,” says Beatrice, the rose-bloom deepening on her cheeks of snow. “But as William wants us to be married as soon after the rains have set in as possible, it will probably be very early in July. Father and mother wanted us to wait until December. They said I had been with them for so short a time. But William would not hear of it.”

“I do not know whether I should like a long engagement or a short one best,” says Lilian as she dangles her little feet to and fro. “It would be very nice to be engaged, to receive all the congratulations and presents, and to choose your trousseau, and to receive so much attention. But it must be very nice to be married too—to have your own house and servants——”

“And to order dinner,” says Maud Hilton with a smile.

“Yes.”

“A long engagement,” says May Wynn, “would enable the persons to know each other better; prevent a hasty and foolish marriage, than which nothing could be more terrible.”

“Oh, I should not like a long engagement if it led to the marriage being broken off,” says Lilian Fane, at which they all laugh, being very ready to laugh.

“I do not understand an engagement being broken

off—on the part of the woman, at all events,” says Maud Hilton in her deep, quiet voice. “She should not enter into it if she does not love the man; and if she loves him, nothing can alter that—it must be once for all.”

“People marry more than once—love more than once,” says Agnes Hilton.

“I do not understand how they can,” says Maud; “and that marrying again is to me incomprehensible—horrible. I do not think either man or woman ought to marry again: their union ought to be to all eternity.”

“Poor Miss Lyster’s case shows how dangerous long engagements are,” says Lilian. “You see she lost both her lovers, and was never married at all, and is now an old maid.”

“Her first lover was killed in the Cabul war?”

“Yes.”

“And her second in the Punjâb campaign?”

“Yes.”

“How terrible!” says gentle May Wynn.

“And how can man die better
Than facing fearful odds,
For the ashes of his fathers
And the temples of his gods?”

quotes Maud Hilton from a favourite poem of hers.

“The second was the saddest case,” says Beatrice Fane. “Miss Lyster kept putting off her marriage because she would not leave her invalid mother, and then he went on that campaign and was killed.”

“It would have been better if she had married him, and she could have nursed her mother just as well afterwards,” says Lilian.

“Has any one seen the mother, Mrs. Lyster?”

“Oh no. No one now in the station has ever seen her. She keeps entirely indoors, and when people call only Miss Lyster receives them. Even Dr. Campbell has never seen her. They say she will not let an English doctor come into the house—not to see *her*.”

"Then she cannot be very ill."

"Or treats herself."

"Some people get into the way of never leaving the house."

"But she will not see any one in the house—no English people."

"She may have taken a vow."

"Or be paralyzed, or bedridden."

"It is curious in how many families there is a mysterious mother whom no one ever sees," says Maud Hilton.

"We had an awful night last night," says Lilian Fane to May Wynn, sitting below her. "The second punkah coolie kept falling asleep." (At this season of the year you are obliged to have the punkah in motion over your head during most of the hours you are out of bed, and during all the hours you are in bed, and it is pulled by relays of coolies.) "Just as one got to sleep one's self this man fell asleep, and then the mosquitoes began to devour one, and one awoke all hot and wet—drenched. It was terrible."

"They say the ice in the pits is failing, and that it will not last out for more than another month," says May Wynn. "We had not our full quantity yesterday."

"Nor had we. The butter was quite liquid, and the water tepid."

"No more iced water!" cries Lilian. "That will be awful—terrible!" She was fond of the use of those two words. She was to learn in a day or two that there are things more awful than tepid water, more terrible than the stopping of a punkah.

"Oh, here is father!"

From where she is sitting, or rather perched, she has command of the gardens. In fact, that is one reason why she has placed herself there. Her pretty eyes are roving eyes, and she likes them to have plenty of room to rove in. The others can only see to the end of the curve of the stream, or along the length of one of the pillared aisles of shade of the banian tree.

CHAPTER II.

AN INDIAN MORNING.

THE boom of the morning gun on its way to the valley of the Jumna passes over the extensive grounds of the stately mansion known as Melvil Hall. Melvil Hall had been built in the first years of our occupancy of the land, in the days when we took a proud, imperial view of our position in India, and not a shamefaced, apologetic, and deprecatory one, as we seem to do now; when a certain pomp and stateliness of living was deemed befitting in the representatives of the ruling power. Melvil Hall stood at the edge of the broken ground which forms the margin of the valley of the Jumna, and which, some fifty miles lower down, expands into a wide reticulation of ravines, and constitutes the most striking feature in the surrounding landscape. In the laying out of the grounds skilful use had been made of these hollows. One had been turned into a green and shady dell, another into a pretty, winding lake, the sides of another cut down into terraces. They afforded the delights, so rare in the flat, alluvial plains of Northern India, of looking on a slope, of walking down a declivity. The mansion itself stood at the top of a sharp slope, and the declivity had been got rid of by building up a row of separate lower rooms, the flat roof to which formed a fine broad terrace along one side of the house.

At one end of the magnificent veranda, which runs along the whole length of its western side, a small table is set out with the "chota hazree," or little breakfast,

the early morning meal. Mark the costly, dainty appointments—the heavy, handsome, old-fashioned silver tea-service; the china, light and transparent as an egg-shell; the linen, so beautifully fine and white. And white as driven snow are the flowing garments of the long-bearded old Khansaman who is standing by the side of the table. He is a tall, well-built, handsome man, with a peculiarly mild and benevolent cast of countenance; his name is Rahman Khan. His snowy-white beard and hair indicate extreme old age; he has served the Melvil family for forty-five years, and began that service in this very house shortly after it had been built by the present occupant's grandfather.

The sound of the morning gun has hardly died away as Mr. Melvil walks down the veranda towards the breakfast-table. He has a short but well-built figure; he walks with a peculiarly quick, firm step; he was the best runner and jumper of his day, the day also of Tom Brown, who has made due record of this fact in his "School Days," at Rugby. He has a full, upright forehead, keen, sharp eyes, a firm-set mouth. There is a certain neat elegance in his dress. In his bearing you may read a quiet pride.

Mr. Melvil is the "Commissioner" of Khizrabad. The reader may perhaps remember that at that time Sir John Lawrence was the "Chief Commissioner" of our then last-acquired kingdom of the Punjâb, and that at this present time a "Chief Commissioner" rules over our now last-acquired kingdom of Burmah. "The District" is the territorial unit of our rule in India; it is ruled over by a "Magistrate and Collector," or by a "Deputy Commissioner;" a group of districts constitutes a division, which is ruled over by a "Commissioner;" the united divisions make up the Province, or Presidency, ruled over by a Governor, or Lieutenant-Governor, or Chief Commissioner. The post of Commissioner is, therefore, a high one—was one of more than usual importance at Khizrabad, because the incumbent of it was a "Political Agent" as well, by virtue

of being in charge of the Nuwâb of Khizrabad and his affairs. It is a characteristic feature of our rule in India that those high and important administrative posts of Collector and Commissioner are not held to involve any political, but only administrative, functions. The Collector is a Prefect, not a Proconsul. An Indian District is held to be as much out of the region of foreign politics as an English county. There is a separate political department which deals with the "Native States" and such like political matters. Mr. Melvil looks very young for so high a post. In those days men did attain much earlier to these high offices, were thus the better trained and fitted for the highest. But Mr. Melvil's promotion was rapid even for those days, and was due partly to strong family interest, but mainly to his merits, which were eminently bureaucratic.

The meal dispatched with characteristic rapidity, Mr. Melvil, before riding forth to do the outdoor work which precedes his important and laborious indoor duties, proceeds to make his usual morning inspection of his own establishment. The out-offices, situated as far as possible from the house, form a large and populous square. Here are the fowl-house and the sheep-house, and the goat-house, and the cow-house, and the tealery, and the quailery, and the columbarie, and the extensive godowns, and all the other adjuncts of a large Anglo-Indian establishment of the olden time. Here are the fine stables, with their long rows of stalls, all well filled—for Mr. Melvil is very fond of horses, drives his four-in-hand, is a patron of the turf; his colours are well known on every racecourse from Calcutta to Peshawur. And now Mr. Melvil is sweeping along the Mall, his sowar, or mounted orderly, behind him; and now riding fast—he always does ride fast—over the road which passes along the top of the ridge, and close by the Flag-staff Tower which crowns its highest point.

Very striking at this early morning hour are the two views which the ridge separates, and of which it gives command. On one side, against the fast-brightening

east, rise up the long red battlements, with their massive bastions and lofty gateways, the terraced roofs, the marble palace chambers, the lofty, slender minarets of the noble city of Khizrabad. On the other side there stretches away to the westward an undulating, wooded tract of country, which many love to look down on because it looks like an English scene, whose variety of tint is most striking at this season of the year, when the mimosas are putting on their tender robes of green which yield such refreshment to the eye.

But Mr. Melvil does not stop to gaze. He does not care much for landscapes. Looking to the right, over the fair woodland, made him think only of the report he had to write with regard to the settlement of certain villages lying in that direction; looking to the left, the marble domes and cupolas of the palace, standing out against the amber sky, aroused in him no other thought than that of the remonstrance he meant to address to the Nuwâb on the subject of his continued payment of large sums of money to his youngest Begum, the Sikunder Begum, a beautiful young woman known also by many a complimentary title, such as the Delight of the Harem, the Adornment of the Palace, the Light of the Universe. At the thought of that annoying young princess Mr. Melvil touches his horse sharply with his heels. In an outlying suburb bordering on the Ajmere Road he is met by Mr. Sandys, the "Collector," and proceeds to examine with him the route of a proposed new drain. They go poking about in back slums and alleys in a way that is very astonishing to the native official who accompanies them. Why all this personal toil? Why this self-infliction? In the East it is the dignity of ease, the delight of sloth—not the dignity of labour, the delight of work. Officials of their exalted rank in an Eastern State would consider such employment derogatory and degrading.

As, pursuing his way, Mr. Melvil rides through the main street of the suburb, observe how deferentially the people make way for him and salute him, how they dis-

mount from their horses or descend from their vehicles, how the shopkeepers stand up to salaam to him. That if he should come here three days hence there would be none so poor to do him reverence; that he would be mocked at, jeered at, buffeted, slain; that that dirty butcher now bowing so deep would be ready to cut him down; the changed expression of those faces; the changed employment of those hands—that was certainly the very last thing that would have seemed possible to Mr. Melvil now. Entering the city, he rides on to the palace-fortress. This has only two gateways on its city side (and only one other, that opening on to the river)—the Bolund Durwaza, or Lofty Gateway; and the Moobarik Durwaza, or Blessed Gateway. At both of these are guards of sepoy—sepoys of the Honourable East India Company. Entering by the Lofty Gateway, Mr. Melvil passes on to the other, by the side of which are the quarters of the English officer in charge of the palace. With him Mr. Melvil proceeds to inspect certain repairs that are in hand in connection with some of the palace chambers. These chambers are situate very high up, and in order to carry out the work, ladders of very great length have had to be provided. In the next few days these ladders are to be employed for a less peaceful purpose, and are to play a prominent part in the memorable history of the outbreak at Khizrabad.

Passing out again at the Moobarik Durwaza, Mr. Melvil enters the broad road that leads down from the main street of the city to the "River Gate," also called the "Allahabad Gate," which opens on to the bank of the Jumna. This street is thronged with people, presents the aspect of a moving fair, for at this hour the greater portion of the Hindu population of the town is going down to the river to bathe. A similar throng has moved down the river and back again every morning for many a century back, ever since the city was built; for this is one of the settled features in the Hindu mode of life. What the morning ride or drive, the meeting at the "coffee shop" of the mess, or in the public gardens,

and the morning bath and family prayers are to the English people, this walk down to the river, and the refreshing plunge in its waters, the casting of flowers on the sacred wave, the recitation of sacred verses, and the performance of other acts of devotion, the social converse on the bank, are to the wealthier portion of the Hindu population of the town. The crowd is made up of households: whole families go down to the river together, just as they do to the seashore in the summer in England.

Here is the sleek and portly father—sleek and portly, because the crowd is composed chiefly of the opulent and well-fed classes: of tradesmen, of the grain merchants, and the cloth merchants, and the sweetmeat-makers; of the sellers of brassware, the goldsmiths and the silversmiths, and the money-lenders—who moves along with fat, big plump thighs, rotund stomach, and full, fleshy chest, all plainly given to view, for he has nothing on but his skullcap and his loin-cloth; and the good mother, portly likewise, with her fair, or at all events light-coloured, face unveiled, walking on pattens, the buttons of which she clasps between the big toe and the next one—her feet, of course, are bare; and the young maidens of the house, who draw their sheets or linen veils coquettishly round their faces, though not so closely but that you may catch a sight of their coal-black eyes and the big nose-rings of which they are so proud; and the children, sometimes clad in garments exactly like those of their fathers and mothers, which makes them look like dwarfs or miniature men and women—sometimes not clad at all, boy or girl, or clad only in the symbol of dress, a piece of string round the waist, but all laden with gold or silver ornaments, heavy wristlets and anklets—a foolish custom that leads to many murders. Family group joins family group, and all move on with friendly chat and laughter.

Outside River Gate the crowd disperses itself along the bank of the stream. There are here none of those high, pointed-roofed pagodas, none of those ghats, or

bathing-places, with their long flights of steps and pretty flanking towers, which form so beautiful a feature of most of the towns on the banks of the Ganges and Jumna; there is no room for them; the river runs too closely under the wall of the town. But temporary grass sheds have been put up on the sands for the convenience of the bathers. On wooden platforms, placed by the side of the stream, or a little way in it, sit, cross-legged, the priests, who receive the offerings and help the bathers in their devotions. Such of the men-bathers as need it squat down on the sand before the barbers, and have their heads shaved and their finger-nails and toe-nails pared. Many a page might be written as to the effect which the want of mechanical appliances has had in producing the social and religious customs of the East—how if you have but one vessel to drink out of, and that of brass, the letting any one else put his lips to it will be the strongest mark of friendship and brotherhood; how if you eat with the fingers you will be excessively careful as to their purity and as to who dips his hand into the same dish with you; and how the command and use of knife and fork and crockery and glass will have more effect in destroying the extreme rigidities of caste than any amount of writing; how in lands where vermin multiply very fast, so that the plague of lice and flies came to rank with the plague of the rivers of blood and the slaying of the first-born, the razor was the only means of personal cleanliness available; how the shaving of the head became a religious ceremonial, carried into Western lands in the tonsure of the priest; how enormous social and religious changes will be produced by the command of soap fitted for personal use, and of tooth-combs.

But most of the men have come down only for the lesser purification of the bath. Men and women and children wade into the water together. The bathing is carried on with the utmost regard to decency, as understood. The naked little boys and girls splash about and enjoy themselves hugely. The women take quiet dips

with their garments on—the bathing serves to wash them too. Here is a Brahmin up to his waist in the water, uttering the sacred words, handling the sacred thread dependent from his shoulder, joining the outside edges of his two hands and taking up the sacred water in the hollow so formed and pouring it out as an oblation to the great luminary towards whom his face is turned. Yonder leap the well-fed flames of a funeral pyre. The men who have finished bathing are putting fresh caste marks on to forehead and chest and arm. The men and the women of different families get together, each with each, and gossip and chat and laugh. And then they saunter home again, refreshed and purified both in body and in soul.

But when Mr. Melvil passes out of River Gate he does not go down towards the bathing-place, but continues along the road until he comes to the head of the bridge of boats which carries it across the Jumna. Here he is met by Major Fane and some other officials, civil and military. They have assembled together in committee to consider some question connected with the bridge.

The tide of traffic across the bridge is just now at its fullest. At this season of the year it is at these early morning hours that it runs strongest over every road. The string of carts now coming creaking across the bridge, which sinks and rises as they pass, left the last encamping ground at two o'clock this morning. The country folk are crowding into the town with their country produce. The wood-cutters and the grass-cutters are returning from the distant wastes and forests, bearing on their heads their bundles of fuel and fodder, wood and grass. Drove of donkeys come across laden with water-melons and musk-melons, grown on the sandbanks of the river. "Hoonh! hoonh! Hoonh! hoonh!" and the fast-trotting bearers, with dusty bare legs, come running across, bearing on their shoulders a palanquin, from the open door of which an English lady puts out her head to gaze up at the soaring battlements surmounted by the lovely marble chambers of the famous palace of

Khizrabad. She has journeyed for hundreds of miles, travelling always at night so as to avoid the heat of the day, over lonely savannas and through desolate jungles, as over the highly cultivated village-crowded plains; and will so journey for hundreds of miles more, having no other companionship than that of the constantly-changing relays of bearers, without any thought of fear. Happy she to be travelling this week and not next!

The rude, springless vehicles of the land pass this way and that in constant stream. Here is the picturesque Ruth, with its pagoda-like roof and gay-coloured curtains and painted sides, drawn by a pair of splendid bullocks with high humps and huge hanging dewlaps; the little open Bhylee, with its pair of little active bullocks; the Ekka, with a pony between its uncouth splayed bamboo shafts. The number of men and women and children who can manage to squat themselves on the one square seat of one of these vehicles fills the stiff-limbed Englishman with astonishment; it looks to him like an acrobatic feat. The winding of a bugle, and a dâk gharri, or stage-carriage, comes jolting across, having in it a young English lad, whose rosy cheeks proclaim that he has just left his native land. Well for him that he is crossing the bridge to-day and not a couple of days hence. Flocks of goats and herds of cattle; bands of barefooted and barelegged pedestrians; bands of fakirs with matted locks, and bodies covered with dust and ashes, and as nearly naked as they can be; bands of pilgrims bearing on their shoulders long bamboos, from the ends of which depend little baskets in which are packed the blown-glass flasks containing the holy water drawn from some very sacred spot on some very sacred river; strings of camels tied nose and tail; men riding on horses or ponies, or sitting sideways on bullocks; a Rajah or Nuwâb with his motley following; the stream is very full.

Here come three travellers on horseback, accompanied by several baggage-ponies and many attendants on foot.

We are concerned with these. Mohammedans and Hindus button their long coats, otherwise of similar shape, on opposite sides of the breast—so far are race and religious distinctions carried—and by this alone you can tell that of the two men riding ahead, and whose countenances announce that they are natives of these provinces, the stout, burly man is a Mohammedan, the thin spare man a Hindu; while the features and the peculiar-shaped turban of the third horseman, who has fallen a little behind the others, proclaim him to be a Mahratta. Turning the corner of the toll-house, which stands at the head of the bridge, these horsemen come suddenly face to face with the Englishmen gathered together there—Melvil, Fane, and two more. The unexpected rencontre seems to disturb and trouble them. The Hindu's right hand goes up with a sudden automatic action, palm downwards, as if he were about to make a military salute; but he suddenly turns the palm upwards and changes the stiff salute into an ordinary salaam. The Mussulman makes an easy, courteous salutation, the Mahratta a very offhand one. As they pass by the Englishmen look after them.

"The thin fellow nearest us looked like a sepoy," says one.

"He seemed to be about to make us a military salute. I wonder why he didn't," says another.

"What a capital horse the stout man is on!" says Mr. Melvil, and then they resume their committee talk. They do not know who the travellers are, but the travellers seem to know them.

"That man of small stature who is mounted on the big gray horse is Milmil (Melvil) Sahib, the Commissioner," says the burly Mohammedan.

"The evil-liver has a sharp look," says the keen-faced, slight-framed Mahratta.

"He has a good steed under him," continues the Mohammedan, as great a lover of horses and with as good an eye for one as Mr. Melvil himself—"a very good horse. And the long man in whose eye there was

a glass is Major Fyne (Fane), who has charge of the arsenal here."

"I thought I remembered his face," says the remaining horseman, an Oudh Brahmin; "I have seen him often. It is a matter of four years that we were stationed at Allahabad, and he was then in charge of the magazine there."

"*Ghumundi!*" he adds. This is one of those meaningful, expressive words, common in all languages, for which it is impossible to find an exact equivalent in another. It expresses "one who indulges in pride to excess;" one "madly proud."

Mr. Melvil has returned home, and is seated at his office table. The post has come in while he has been away, and the table is heaped with papers. He proceeds to dispose of them with amazing celerity. Mr. Melvil is a man of facts and not of fancies. He is a "practical man," which is somehow held to be opposed to "a man of ideas," though all practical work is the outcome of ideas. He belonged to the class which works systems, not to that which invents them—administrators rather than statesmen. He is a man of details, not of general principles. Fully acquainted with the routine of his work, loving it, of quick perception, self-confident, decided, laborious, punctual, he had all the qualities which make a great administrator, lead to success under a bureaucracy. He had the defects as well as the perfections of such a character. Feelings did not interfere with his work. He had no ideas of his own to clash with those of the men above him. He would carry out one policy as soon as another. He regarded the people of the land only from a police and fiscal, from an enumeration, sanitation, taxation, vaccination point of view. In connection with his work, in the carrying out of measures, he thought only of to-day, not of yesterday or of to-morrow; not of the past or the future, but only of the present; had no care for reasons or for consequences; they were the concern of those who ordered the measures. He was, it may be said, a repre-

sentative man of his service. The great merits of that great service, the Indian Civil Service, are well enough known. But the helplessness of its officers in connection with the now impending insurrection or mutiny, the quick downfall of their power before it, its coming on them as a complete surprise, and their inability to account for it, showed a great defect somewhere. They were too much routine workers—more administrators than statesmen.

Rapid dispatch is an excellent thing; but it has its drawbacks. These had displayed themselves in Mr. Melvil's work. He had first made his name in the settlement department. The "settlement" of a district means the measurement of all the fields in it; their grouping together; the fixing their rental for a term of years; the apportionment of it between the State, the landlord, and the tenant. Mr. Melvil had to carry out this important measure in a large and important district. The work was done quickly, and was perfect in every detail; every form and statement was duly filled up; the Government obtained an increased rental, and Mr. Melvil his promotion. Those two great objects were obtained. But the *Jumma* (rental) had been fixed too high, and the administration of that wide tract of land became a burden and a reproach. A rack-rented peasantry were driven into crime. The "Magistrates and Collectors" were hampered in the performance of both the great duties from which they took their name; it was irksome to punish men for crimes due to the action of the State; irksome to wring an unjust cess from them. The tenants groaned under the payment of the rent, the landlords under its collection, which kept them in constant fear of loss of their position, their landlordship. And in the coming time of trouble both landlord and tenant, not unnaturally, displayed no extreme desire for the continuance of the system under which they had suffered.

Two of the pieces of work Mr. Melvil has to dispose of this morning concern this narrative. Among the

signs and portents of the time was the sudden and mysterious transmission, a little while before, of the unleavened cakes known as chupatees, and which form the daily food of the people, across the width of the land. They had been passed from village to village, no one—no Englishman, at least—knowing by whose order or why. Mr. Melvil has been directed to make inquiries into the matter, and is now submitting his report. He is a dead hand at a report. This is an admirable one. The passage of the chupatees is distinctly and continuously traced. You can tell the very hour at which they reached or left any village. The only defect in it is that it affords no solution of the mystery. Mr. Melvil saw no meaning in this strange occurrence, and so pronounced it meaningless.

The other matter was this. The East India Company was at this time at war with a great Mohammedan potentate, the Shah of Persia. A placard had been found affixed to the walls of the great mosque at Khizrabad, which purported to be a manifesto from the Shah addressed to "all the Faithful in India." The infidels had brought troops to the soil of a power of Islam. They desired "to destroy the religions of Islam in Persia in like manner as the religion of the Mussulmans of India." It was incumbent on the Faithful to rise against them everywhere. Let them unite all differences, and "remember that they had but one Koran and one Kibleh, and extend the hand of brotherhood, remembering the words of the Prophet, 'Verily all true believers are brothers.'" Let them all take part in the Jihad, or Holy War. Let the Faithful in Hindustan unite with him (the Shah) "against this tribe of wanderers from the path of righteousness," and "have no friendship with a tribe of whom the Prophet saith, 'Verily they do not love you, and neither do you love them.'" Let all the Faithful in Hindustan consider it incumbent upon them to follow the precept, "Slay, in the name of God, those who wish to slay you;" and "let the old and the young, the small and the great,

the wise and the ignorant, the ryot and the sepoy, all without exception arise in the defence of the orthodox faith of the Prophet, and, having girt up the waist of valour, adorn their persons with arms and weapons.” “And for the purpose of settling the quarrel, it is necessary that not only a small number of true believers should stand forth in defence of the faith, but that the whole should answer our call.” “And the victory should be with them, to make manifest the decree of God, ‘Verily the Almighty will weigh the wicked in different scales from the pure.’” Mr. Melvil disposes of this by calling it “the work of some crazy fanatic.”

CHAPTER III.

THE SNAKE.

ALONG one of the paths of the Ghilani Bâgh advanced a group of natives, having in their midst an Englishman over whom one of them holds a huge red canvas umbrella: this is Major Fane. He is making his usual morning inspection of the garden. He stops to observe the work of one of the coolies employed in it, and not approving, he turns to the orderly behind him and says "Maro" (that is, "Beat"), and then turning round again towards the coolie, he points his long, gloved forefinger solemnly towards him and says, in his quiet, drawling voice, "isko" (that is, "him"), and the culprit is beaten (that is, cuffed), not very severely, and the Major passes on.

Major Fane is a man with a tall and elegant figure--Beatrice had probably derived hers from him--and moves with an easy, sauntering gait. His dress exhibits an elegance of cut not common at that time in India. His clothes are evidently London-made. He wears gloves, a thing not usual in India; at all events not at that season of the year. But Lucius Fane had dressed well from his youth upward. From his boyhood had he been distinguished for his calm, quiet, self-possessed manner, for his elegant bearing and his lofty carriage. As a child of eight his bow was stately; at school he was called "my Lord;" at Addiscombe he was called "the Duke," or rather "the Dook."

Dismissing the garden people, all but the umbrella-

bearer, of course, Major Fane saunters up towards the watercourse, and mounting the bank—here a somewhat high one—moves along it to the corner where the girls are seated. He salutes the fair concourse with his usual stately, courtly air.

“Oh, ah, haw! how vewy cool it always is heeaw!” he exclaims as he gets within the far-spread shade of the banian tree. The difference of temperature between the sun and the shade is always very great in tropical lands, more especially in the summer-time.

“Delightfully so,” says Maud Hilton, the only one standing on the pathway.

“Oh, ah!” says Major Fane.

The exclamation is not appropriate. It seemed as if he were doubting the delightfulness of the place, which the tone of his own speech showed that he did not mean to do. But “oh,” “ah,” and “hah,” or oftener “haw,” were mere interjections, mere sounds with him. We all have our favourite, meaningless, recurrent phrases and exclamations, such as “By Jove!” and “By Jingo!” and “Bless my soul!” and “Golly!” and so forth—mere mechanical utterances. But with Major Fane they were more indicative of character than they usually are—indicative of a certain slowness of thought as well as a slowness of speech.

“I saw ‘the Wogue’ being taken home vewy wet,” he says to Agnes Hilton, whose style of beauty, clear cut, aristocratic, somewhat hard, is much to his taste. “The Rogue” is the name of Agnes’s handsome, troublesome horse.

“Yes, I gave him a good gallop round the racecourse.”

“Hah!”

While they are speaking an addition is made to the party.

In each generation very nearly a million of people die of snake-bite in India. There are many causes for this. Snakes multiply excessively. A religious prejudice, founded on fear, prevents the people from killing them. The natives do not wear shoes or stockings. They live

in huts with earthen floors, and thatched roofs covered with gourds and creepers, in which reptiles love to lurk. They sleep on the ground or on low bedsteads, from which the thrown-out hand or dangling leg or arm touches the ground. Then, man walks the surface of the earth perpendicularly on his feet; the snake glides over it horizontally on his belly; the head and the heel are constantly coming in contact; the man's eyes are very high up in the air.

The unexpected addition to the party is that of a snake—a snake of the most venomous kind known.

The girls have all been looking towards Major Fane, and the most subtle of the beasts of the field has come down the pathway towards them unobserved. Maud Hilton feels a sudden pressure on her foot, a gliding motion across her instep, a sudden, cold, horrid, indescribable sensation there; she knows instinctively what it is, even before she glances down and sees. Her first, almost uncontrollable, impulse is to throw up the foot, so as to cast the venomous reptile from her; but she is quick of thought, firm of will, courageous. By doing so she may only throw the snake on to the girls before her; she may only entangle herself with him—cause him to turn on her. She has a wonderful self-command, a wonderful self-possession: she becomes neither mad nor paralyzed with fear, and so she remains quite still—really the safest thing she can do—her eye a little brighter, her cheek a little paler, her right hand grasping the little slender riding-whip a little tighter. Her courage is put to the fullest proof, for the snake is a very long one and is moving slowly, and takes some time passing over her instep. But at last the horrid pressure is removed, and then she calls out, “The snake! the snake!” Then there is a sudden commotion, loud shrieks and cries. They have all seen the enemy of mankind. Agnes Hilton sits quite still with her eyes fixed on the venomous, gliding reptile; not because she is frozen or fascinated or deprived of all power of motion, but simply because she is not made afraid. Beatrice

Fane has run behind the bench ; May Wynn finds herself standing on it by some sudden, unconscious, mechanical action ; while Lilian Fane throws up her legs so violently as to tumble over into the seat, head downward—a comical element in the scene which no one near her has eyes to notice.

“ The snake ! the snake ! ” shouts Maud Hilton to Major Fane, who is standing right in the way of the death-bearer.

“ Oh, ah ! ” says the Major, lifting his eyeglass—he wears an eyeglass—quietly, and fixing it quietly into his right eye.

Disturbed by the cries and movements the serpent has quickened his pace ; the curves in his body have become shorter and move faster from side to side.

“ The snake, Major Fane ! ” “ The snake, father ! ” shout Maud Hilton and Beatrice Fane in one breath.

“ Hah ! ” says Major Fane. That the exclamation is “ Hah ! ” and not “ Haw ! ” indicates a certain degree of excitement on his part. But still he keeps his ground, though it is evident that the snake means to pursue his course down the pathway, is advancing straight at him, and there is now but a short interval between them. The coolie has all this time been still holding the umbrella carefully over his master’s head ; that is to him a paramount duty—he would have continued to fulfil it in the face of a battery of guns ; but the interval has become too short for him ; the fear of the serpent is very strong in the human breast, and so he tumbles down the slope of the bank, by the edge of which he is standing, umbrella and all. Be it remembered that the man’s feet were bare and his legs naked ; and to get out of the way of a snake seems the natural thing to do. This is what the girls expect Major Fane to do, but he doesn’t. They all know his quiet, calm, deliberate way—that he is never hurried in his rising up or his sitting down, in his walk or in his talk. But this, surely, is not the moment for lofty leisureliness.

“ Run, father ! ” shouts Lilian from the top of the

arm of the bench, on to which she has scrambled again.

"Jump!" cries Maud Hilton.

One great difficulty in story-telling is that of conveying a just impression of the passage of time. What has occupied a long period in happening is described in a few words which convey the idea of briefness, while that which happened in a few seconds may need a detailed description which conveys the idea of length, of duration. "Ten years passed away," "A sudden flash of lightning;" one reads as fast as the other. What has now taken the reader many minutes to read had passed in a few seconds.

Snakes do not generally attack men. They do not bite the heel unless they think it is about to bruise the head. They only give the fatal nip to hand or foot when they find these in the way, feel them upon them. They would rather avoid man than assail. They do not appear to bear about with them a constant sense of the enmity engendered in Eden. Their attack is more often defensive than aggressive. But it so happens that this snake has his dwelling-place in a hole in the bank a little distance beyond where Major Fane is standing. He evidently thinks that the man is purposely barring the way to it, of course with hostile intent, and so he prepares to frighten him out of the way, or exercise on him the power of killing which in the case of birds and small animals he finds so immediately fatal. And so he has reared himself up and expanded his horrid hood—so making manifest that he is a cobra da capello. His forked tongue is darting quickly in and out; he is slowly swinging his hooded head from side to side preparatory to launching himself forward to administer the fatal stroke and nip. The girls look on with horrified eyes, some hardly seeing; but Agnes Hilton's steady gray eyes quietly trace the distinctive spectacles on the expanded hood.

"Oh, ah!" says Major Fane. He has in his hand a thin Malacca cane, a clouded cane, for the nice conduct of which he was famous.

"Oh, ah!" he exclaims, and a sudden, swift blow of the cane across the neck, and the cobra is knocked over; a sharp cut across the back, and he is paralyzed; a fortunate stroke across the little flat head, and he is dead, and Major Fane has put the point of his well-cut, English-made shoe under the body of the dead reptile and heaved it into the watercourse, and it has sunk and disappeared. The orderly has rushed up the bank, and is holding the huge umbrella over Major Fane's head as before. The whole thing has passed like a dream.

"Tell your mother, Beatrice," says Major Fane, "that I do not want my breakfast to be sent up to the Magazine this morning." And putting his well-gloved fingers to his hat, he lifts it with his usual easy grace, and saunters quietly away.

"It has made me feel quite faint," says Beatrice.

"How my heart is beating!" says May Wynn, putting her hand to her side.

"Well done, Major Fane!" cries Agnes Hilton, clapping her hands.—"The snake must have passed very close to you, Maud?"

"He passed right over my instep," says Maud quietly.

"And you did not move?" exclaims May Wynn in an admiring, almost awe-stricken, voice.

"I should have shrieked and kicked out and jumped a yard high in the air," cries Lilian Fane.

"If she had kicked out she would have sent the snake on to the top of us; that is why she did not," cries Agnes with quick understanding, and looking at her sister with proud, fond eyes and with a glow of admiration on her face.

"It would be a fine sight to see your father in a great city at the time of an earthquake," says Maud quickly, turning towards Beatrice Fane. "I can imagine him sauntering down a street where the houses were shaking on either side, and looking up at them quietly with his eyeglass in his eye."

"Himself unshaken while everything else was shak-

ing," says her sister Agnes. "I like a man like that."

"It was a cobra, and a very big one too," she goes on to say; "the spectacles were enormous."

A train of thought has arisen in Beatrice Fane's mind, and she says, "I wonder if one *could* put one's mouth to a snake-bite and suck the wound, as I believe was done by somebody."

"Why, of course, at once, if it was any one you loved—cared for," says Maud Hilton in her deep, bell-like tones.

"Surely for any one—if one only could," says gentle-hearted May Wynn.

"A lover's ear will hear the lowest sound," says Shakespeare. The deepening colour on the cheeks betrays the ears that have first heard the fall of the approaching footsteps. Maud Hilton's cheek has flushed first. Her eyes turn, as if drawn perforce towards the pathway by which Major Fane had approached, and then, as if by a sudden effort of self-control, are turned away again. The colour has risen, red and bright, into May Wynn's soft, womanly cheek too. In Beatrice Fane's hair lies the gold of sunset, and now on her cheek appears the flush of the morn; it proclaims the coming god. But Lilian Fane continues to dangle her feet unconcernedly. Agnes Hilton casts a quick, sudden glance at her sister, but that is all.

Three cheeks have flushed, but only two men appear.

Of one of them you would say, "What a handsome young fellow!" of the other, "What a grand man!" But with regard to the latter, as with regard to Maud Hilton—whose cheeks have paled, and whose hands tremble at the nearer approach of the men as they had not paled or trembled when she had felt the weight of the death-dealing serpent upon her foot—it was of the inward and not of the outward, of the light within and not of the tabernacle, that you first took cognizance. It was a grand face, a majestic form; but it was the expression of the one, the carriage of the other, that

first impressed you. The features of the face were as finely cut as those of an antique statue : a straight nose well set on, a well-cut mouth and magnificently moulded chin, a splendid forehead, broad and high, on which “sparkled plain the star of greatness,” to borrow a line from “The Rose Garden” of Sheikh Sâdi of Shiraz, eyes dark gray, like those of an eagle ; but it is the look of power, of stern command, the noble royal look, that first engages your regard. Your eye will follow with attention the details of that splendid, manly form—the wide shoulders, the deep chest, the lean flanks, the great height—but it is its majestic carriage that will strike you first. That pale, commanding brow, those eagle eyes, that firm-set mouth—you know that you look upon one destined for great things, born to be a ruler among his fellow-men. And though he is quite a young man this is already beginning to appear. Philip Lennox, who is only a captain in the army, though he has held higher local rank, has already attained a foremost place among the famous soldier-statesmen of our latest conquered kingdom—province they call it in India—of the Punjâb. He has shown a conspicuous capacity for affairs, civil or military. He has shown that he has in him the qualities of a great administrator as well as of a great general. Placed in charge of a wild, turbulent, newly-acquired district on the Punjâb frontier, he had introduced law and order into it, founded cities in it, and intersected it with roads. He had, at the same time, made it secure against the incursions of the wild frontier tribes ; had worsted those strong, fierce mountaineers in many an engagement ; had stricken an awe into them such as they had never felt before. A man of enormous strength and courage, an accomplished swordsman, he had met their foremost champions in single combat and overcome them. How skilful and cunning his arrangements for the fight ; how well combined the movements ; how fierce the assault ; how terrible the long, indefatigable, unsparing pursuit ! That pursuit, in which their best and bravest fell along

the way, many under the force of Lennox's own arm—for he was ever foremost in it—was what struck most terror into those border raiders. He was a terrible man—terrible in the battlefield, terrible in his office chair. He exacted an implicit obedience, the utmost tale of work. He was an indefatigable worker himself. His enforcement of a full pull at the collar, his imperious, unbending will, his reserved nature—which seemed to expand and become genial only on the battlefield—made ordinary men think service under him hard and unpleasant. That was the only thing that could be urged against his civil rule. But his name was a name of power.

Such had been the effect of his fine presence, his strength of intellect, his force of will, his fearlessness, his constant command of success, of his strict justice, and, it may be added, of his plain, pure mode of living, that he had actually to exert all the power of his authority to prevent himself from being deified, for a sect had started up bearing his name, of which he was to have been the god, the object of worship.

His companion does not walk the earth with such commanding footsteps, but with a lighter, gayer tread. You might have said of the two, "Here comes Richard Cœur de Lion, with a handsome, bright young squire." Though there is really not much difference in age between the two, the latter looks much the younger man, because his face is more gay and bright, not so severe, and because it is so smooth and fair and hairless. It is a handsome face, and he has also a very well-built form—light and strong and graceful. It is a good face, with clear, bright, honest eyes and a pleasant, smiling mouth, with a look of almost feminine delicacy and refinement. There is a look of shrewdness, too, in the eyes—a canny look, which, with the rather high cheekbones, proclaims his Scottish nativity. But notwithstanding the somewhat high cheekbones the outline of the face is oval; the forehead is broad and upright, if not very high; the gray eyes, somewhat small and deep set, have in them a

shrewd, kindly, thoughtful look, with an oft-coming humorous twinkle; the nose a delicate aquiline; a firm-set, well-cut mouth, expressive of shrewdness, firmness, kindliness, gaiety; a well-moulded chin. This young man is also in the army. He belongs to the 76th Regiment of Native Infantry. His name is William Hay. He is the William referred to by Beatrice Fane, he who would not have his marriage put off until December, but insisted that it should take place immediately after the setting in of the rains. With all his feminine air he does not look like a young fellow who would be either a "laggard in love or a dastard in war."

CHAPTER IV.

“I WISH IT HAD.”

THESE girls are all fresh out from England, as their clear, bright, healthy looks unmistakably show. They have all come out “from home” during the past cold season—some earlier, some later. Their arrival had, of course, produced a great commotion in Khizrabad. Young Englishwomen did not flock to India in those days in such numbers as they do now. During the past two years the only spinster in the place had been the Miss Lyster about whom the girls have talked, and who, though still very graceful, yet was no longer young. Her life was devoted to the nursing of an invalid mother, and was bound to be so devoted so long as that mother lived. The advent of four or five only commonly good-looking, attractive girls would have been deemed a great event, and these were uncommonly good-looking and attractive. Their coming had added greatly to the gaiety and joyfulness of the place. There had been a series of balls and dinners and picnics, and other social entertainments. There is a very great difference between a solitary ride and a ride with a pretty girl. The deeper emotions had been stirred. To use the old-world phraseology, which science had not yet superseded, Cupid began to dart his keen arrows around. Now arose before the men visions of love and marriage, of sweet courtship and happy wedlock. There came a sudden stirring of the strongest passion in the heart of man. Khizrabad passed into the condition of the earth in the days of

Noé, when they thought of nothing but marrying and giving in marriage. There arose in it a turmoil of love-making, in which every one took a part, either as performer or spectator. The progress of each "affair" was watched with the keenest interest. Nothing else was talked about. "He is a 'gone coon,'" or, "Will he 'come to the scratch'?" said the users of slang. Bets were made in *chicks* and bottles of champagne. "Will she accept or refuse?" "What will her mother say?" Each courtship, or faintest shadow of a courtship, produced an immense amount of excitement, of watching and observation, of gossip and talk and comment, of prognostication and prophecy; and two or three of them were going on at the same time. The sporting doctor of the 66th had made Agnes Hilton a prompt, confident proposal, and had been met by a swift, disdainful refusal. Agnes was passionately fond of horses, but not of horsey men. Then old Dr. Brodie of the 76th, the hunk and miser, the founder of and chief shareholder in the Khizrabad Bank, had afforded immense amusement by falling in love with the child Lilian, forty years and more his junior. How ludicrous had been the antics of the toothless old wooer with his appropriately gold-mohur-hued face! He had thought that he could descend on the fair one in a shower of rupees, one may say, though he was liker to Vulcan than to Jove. "He thinks that his lakh of rupees will make up for his lack of everything else," said Major Penn, a writer for the Press and a man of wit. "It is a good thing for us that old Brodie has fallen in love," said some fellow in his regiment; "it makes him pleasanter to sit by now that he has a new suit of clothes. He has worn that old *putoo* suit of his for the past twenty years." "No, I thank you, sir!" it was rumoured had been Lilian's English reply to Dr. Brodie's offer of his big hand and little heart in very broad Scotch.

"Marry *our* daughter! *He*—the son of a blacksmith in the Highlands!" said Mrs. Fane to her husband. She was excessively indignant. It was a personal in-

sult. She carried her feelings with regard to Birth—she always spelt it in her mind with a capital letter—to an excessive height.

The beautiful Beatrice Fane had, of course, been the cause of a great stirring of the feelings, of a great arousing of curiosity. Who was she likely to marry? She had half a dozen silent, hopeless adorers. But William Hay had at once openly avowed himself a candidate for her fair hand. He had begun to pay her attentions at once. But Mr. Melvil was the man of highest rank and position in the place. He was in the coveted Civil Service. He might rise—was, in fact, certain to rise—to higher honours yet. The girl marrying him would at once attain to a very high social position. He had a very large income; he had a splendid house, a splendid establishment. He was a man of birth and breeding, of a very polished address, with many social gifts, much liked and popular, good-looking, and in the prime of life. He was a friend of the family, an especial favourite with Mrs. Fane. Her preference, of course, would be for him. Mr. Melvil not only held high rank in the special hierarchy of the East India Company, under which his family had held high official positions and attained to fame and fortune, but could claim a good place in English social circles, since his uncle (Lord Melvil, the Colonial Governor) had been raised to the peerage. "That is enough for her," said those who did not like Mrs. Fane. "The Red Book is her Bible. Of course she will marry her daughter to the nephew of a lord." But Hay had entered the field at once and pressed his suit with vigour. He had secured the first fancy of the girl. The immediate surrender to her charms of a young man of such excellent qualities, of so high a character, of such a winning address, so cheerful and gay, though of an open and pronounced piety, and of such an attractive personal appearance, who might have looked for success in the wooing of any girl, at once recommended him to her favour.

And so it soon began to be whispered about that it

was only the mother's opposition that was likely to prevent William Hay from being successful in his suit. And it certainly spoke very highly for his personal qualities that he was successful, notwithstanding that Mrs. Fane could not make out that he was in any way connected with the Marquis of Tweeddale. His father was only a factor. But he was in the army. He had a promise of civil employ in the Punjâb. He had all the qualities that command success. He was a young man of highest principles and character, strictly religious; and Mrs. Fane did not fail to remember that that was greatly in his favour, even in regard to his worldly interests. There was then a great uplifting of the Christian flag in India; the Clapham sect was very powerful, both in the Board of Control and in the Board of Directors (of the East India Company) in England; the last ruler of these provinces had been the son of a missionary; the present ruler of the Punjâb was an Irish Protestant; it was desired to make the government of India of a distinctly Christian character; missionary effort was favoured (all of which, doubtless, had its influence in bringing about the coming "Mutiny"); men in high official positions professed—in the religious meaning of the word—Christianity, and promulgated it; piety spelled promotion, prayer paid.

Then Hay had that gentlemanly address which Mrs. Fane so greatly valued. He was very good-looking; he was very "nice." And though the wife of the grandson of an earl, herself the niece of the Chairman of the Board of Directors, Mrs. Fane was also a woman. Here was a case of true love—of love at first sight. It was soon to be seen that Hay's immediate and vigorous love-making had had its effect. Her opposition might not be of any use. And so with William Hay and Beatrice Fane the course of true love had run smooth, and was now nearing the wished-for end. It had now ceased to have any great personal interest for the good people of Khizrabad, except, of course, in connection with the coming ceremonial and the wedding-breakfast. That

interest was now concentrated on another love affair.

Captain Lennox belonged to the Punjâb Commission, but he was just now on special duty in a neighbouring independent state. He was cousin to William Hay, and often came in (to Khizrabad) to stay with him. There was no doubt that he had been greatly attracted by Maud Hilton. He greatly sought her society; it was certain that she was greatly pleased with his. They were great friends. Had a warmer feeling sprung up between them? Was it likely to do so? They were not either of them of the class of persons who wear their hearts upon their sleeves, and so even the women—lynx-eyed, sharp-nosed, unscrupulously prying and obtrusive as they are in such matters—were at fault. About the great liking and the friendship there could be no doubt. He had singled her out from the very beginning as William Hay had singled out Beatrice Fane. He was in a position to marry, of course. He was about to return to his lonely station, his place of "watch and ward," his "marquissate," on the Punjâb frontier. What more likely than that a man returning to a lonely frontier station, especially a man of Lennox's character, should desire to take a nice, pretty English girl back with him? Would he propose? If he did so, would she not be certain to accept? How could a girl refuse a man like him?

Then May Wynn arrived on the scene, and there was an alteration in the position of things which raised the general excitement to the utmost pitch. Captain Lennox was greatly taken with her; her attraction for him must have been very great when a man of his self-controlled, reserved character allowed it to be so visible. Is it not in love as in electricity (perhaps they are the same thing), that the unlike attracts and the like repels? The man of a strong, commanding character may admire a woman who has the same qualities, but many prefer to marry one of a softer, more yielding nature. The clever man may like to talk to a woman

who is as clever, but prefers to marry one who is not so. Two exactly similar natures would only clash. Two circles can only meet at a point. Prominences fit into hollows. With two similar natures there would be a redundancy of the same quality. Dissimilar natures supply the defects in either, supplement one another. The man prefers the feminine qualities, the woman the masculine. As Lennox was a man of men, so was May Wynn a woman of women.

"It is now six to four on Miss Wynn," said stout old Colonel Barnes. It is strange to reflect how what is of utmost import to ourselves may be a matter of sport and jest to others.

This is the explanation of why three of the girls were excited, though only two men appeared.

"O William!" cries Lilian Fane with girlish eagerness, as the two young men got near to the bench, "we have all nearly been bitten by a snake."

"All of you?" says Hay, smiling his pleasant smile.

"Yes, all of us. It went down the pathway here, close by the bench, right in the middle of our feet."

"If your feet were where they are now *you* were not in much danger," says Hay. Then, "*You* were not in danger?" he says tenderly to Beatrice Fane.

"*You* were in no danger?" says Lennox, with eager solicitude and an unusual softness in his voice, to—May Wynn.

The crimson tide rises high in May Wynn's soft, tender cheek, ebbs low in Maud Hilton's more firmly but as exquisitely moulded one. Among the others there is a sudden, quick awakening of interest, a concentration of attention, a rustle of excitement and expectation. Lilian Fane, still perched on the arm of the seat, gives a little convulsive kick of her legs. Agnes Hilton glances quickly from May Wynn to her sister. She by no means relieves but adds to the tension by her quick, sharp speech.

"It was only my sister who was in any sort of danger. The snake passed right over her foot."

"Yes, and she never moved!" cries Lilian, her astonishment at that fact still upon her. "I should have jumped a yard high. I never could have kept still with the cobra passing over my foot; I must have kicked my foot."

"Maud did not do so because that would have sent the snake on to the top of one of us—of Miss Wynn, perhaps—sent it among us. That is why she did not do so," says Agnes Hilton in her firm, clear voice.

"It was very brave and noble of her!" cries May Wynn, with eager, generous warmth.

"Grand!" cries William Hay, clapping his hands.

Despite all her efforts, Maud Hilton's eyes seek Lennox's face. But a hasty, indifferent "Yes!" is all that comes from him. He does not turn his eyes towards her. He exhibits no concern about the danger she has run; utters no word of praise of her self-control, of congratulation at her escape. He seems to be thinking more of May Wynn's words than of what has given rise to them; of May Wynn's generous warmth of approval than of her own coolness and courage, of her risking of her own life and saving that of some other. Agnes, watching her, sees a slight tremor pass over her frame, a slight spasm pass across her face, both so slight as to have escaped any other but her own angry, excited, solicitous gaze. Then the usual predominant expression of calm self-command comes over the face, and she says quietly,—

"The only one who was really in danger was Major Fane. The snake attacked him. He killed it as quietly with his cane as if he were squashing a fly with a flapper."

"Did he?" says William Hay.

"The only thing that has suffered is Lilian's hat."

"Oh, it is not damaged," cries Lilian, pulling it quickly off her head and looking at it with anxious looks. She was very careful of her adornments. And this was a hat just out from "home," one of the latest fashion.

"There was really more of comedy than of tragedy in the whole affair," goes on Maud with a little laugh—"the

way that Lilian tumbled over into the seat, and the way that Major Fane's orderly tumbled down the embankment, umbrella and all!" and she describes the two incidents in a way that makes them all laugh—the more readily, perhaps, because of the tension of their feelings.

"But I really thought that father would be bitten," says Lilian, as she eagerly relates the details of the affair; "he took such a long time screwing his glass into his eye."

But now the actual physical atmosphere has begun to thrill too. It is past the usual time for being indoors; it is nearly eight o'clock. They must now hurry away. They go down together to one of the gateways where the young men have left their horses. Here the girls must separate for their respective homes. They are all walking, for they all live very near, which is the reason that those who have been riding have sent their horses away.

"We shall all meet again at Mr. Melvil's to-night," says Beatrice Fane.

"Yes," says May Wynn.

"Yes," says Agnes Hilton.

William Hay must see his betrothed one home, of course. Maud Hilton and Agnes have to go up one side of the garden only in order to reach their home, the Bank House, whose grounds are coterminous with those of the Bâgh. And May Wynn does not live much farther off, though her father's bungalow is immediately under the city wall—the north wall of the city. It is natural to suppose that Lennox will accompany Hay to Major Fane's, and that they will then ride home together. It is the natural supposition—what they all expect. Or rather, there is no supposition, no expectation at all in the matter, any more than there is with regard to the Fane girls going to their own house, the Hiltons to theirs. No thought was given to the subject; it was a matter of course. So there is again a sudden thrill of excitement when Lennox says to May Wynn,—

"I will see you home, Miss Wynn."

"Oh no, thank you, no!" replies May Wynn hurriedly, with a rush of blood to her cheek. "There is no need to. It is only a step. I go through the church compound. I am home when I get to the churchyard gate."

"Oh yes, I will see you home. I can go round that way. I dare say I shall be at Major Fane's long before my cousin is ready to leave."

"Good-bye!" "Good-morning!" "*Au revoir!*" and the three parties go their several ways.

Maud and Agnes Hilton walk on for a while in silence. These two sisters love one another very dearly. But Maud's profound reserve has always set somewhat of a barrier between them. The common is the best, after all. Uncommon, higher, nobler natures must have more of isolation. The very excess of sensibility, that makes them so capable of love and sympathy, so desirous of them, makes them shrink from any great display of them, prevents them from attracting them. The excess of feeling prevents its free flow.

"You are very brave, Maud!" says Agnes at last, when they are very near home. There is a double meaning in her words. Maud looks at her with hard, stern eyes.

"I mean to say," exclaims Agnes hastily, "that it was very brave of you to stand so still with that snake, that cobra, on your foot. It might have bitten you."

"I wish it——" and she stops—"had," she was about to say. The word had almost leaped forth from her mouth. She tightly compressed the lips that had almost betrayed her thought. But she is content with having stopped it. She disdains to give her words another turn, to falsify the sentence by giving it another ending, though her quick mind had instantly presented her with one—"had not been so heavy."

"To stand still was the safest thing to do," she adds quietly.

CHAPTER V.

THE CHAPLAIN'S DAUGHTER.

THE distance is certainly a short one. They have very soon reached the church compound—an ordinary compound, like any other ; for in India our dead do not lie in the churchyards, but in separate cemeteries placed some distance away. There May Wynn is home, as she has only to pass across this compound to reach that of her father's bungalow. And so at the gate she stops preparatory to wishing her companion good-bye. But Lennox says to her, " I will see you to the wicket ;" and to the groom, following with his horse, " Stop here." They have crossed the church compound and reached the little wicket which leads into Mr. Wynn's grounds beyond. The wicket stands between two grand old mango-trees, which cast their united shadow over a wide extent of ground. There hangs about the spot that feeling of deep quiet and intense silence which is to be found not on the lonely mountain-top, not in the depths of the primeval forest, not on the solitary, lonely plain, but only in the retired spots of a great, bustling, noisy city. The squirrels are running about around the giant boles of the trees which afford them so safe a home, and their noiseless movements serve to intensify the silence. The wicket is reached. May raises her hand to the latch. " Good-bye ! " she says hurriedly, her eyes turned away.

" I have something to say to you——" and then he stops.

This man is noted for his absolute fearlessness. He has had to fight and rule on the troubled Punjâb frontier. He has crossed swords with many a wild Pathan and many a fierce Afreedy. In his saddle or in his office-chair, wielding sword or pen, no sort of fear has ever troubled him. To encounter the enemy at any odds, to carry out a great administrative scheme, to state his opinions openly and freely, to act upon his own judgment—these things have never cost him a moment's misgiving. He is accustomed to think, speak, write, act, absolutely without fear. He has, hitherto, always treated the future with a lordly indifference. But now he is apprehensive of what the next few minutes may bring forth—afraid to ask a young girl a question. But he has sought this opportunity, and may not let it pass. He places his hand on the wicket so that she may not go through. This brings him close by her side.

“Question to ask you. You must know what it is——”

Her glowing cheeks and downcast eyes confess it. The outstretched hand drops down by her side.

“Will you marry me?”

He has often had words of deepest import to utter—words on which have hung his life and, what he valued far more, his reputation, but they had not cost him such an effort to utter as these.

“I—I—cannot,” she replies.

Hitherto the shock of adverse circumstances has awakened in him nothing but a quicker animation. He has joyed to meet it. He is the born fighter; a struggle to him is delectable; he loves to wrestle and overcome. He cares not for the easy and smooth, but for the rough and difficult. He has had no desire that his bark should glide smoothly down the river of life; the roaring breaker, where there is need for the strong arm and the steady eye, for the stout heart and the thinking brain, is delightful to him. But now the vessel reels at this adverse shock! Now for once does his heart

sink and his spirit falter. He means to make his life noble ; what he seeks would have made it blissful too.

"I am rude and rough, I know," he says ; "I am not what they call a ladies' man. I have lived for many years away from the society of ladies—away from all society—have perhaps got out of its ways. I cannot make myself pleasant. I cannot gloze and smile. I am plain of speech. I speak out what I think. I have had to rule with the strong hand. Men have called me self-opinionated, domineering, harsh." (This talk about himself showed that in him, as in all great men, self-consciousness was very strong.) "They have written it of me. I am held harsh and rough, I know, and I dare say I am. But I think I could be gentle in my own home, to any one I cared for—to—to—— How could I be rough to one whom I would shield from all roughness ? I had dared to hope, Miss Wynn. We have been such friends—I love you so."

"I—I—wish you had not spoken to me," cries May, wringing her hands. "I cannot marry——"

Lennox steels his heart to hear the fatal "you."

But "any one," falters May. "I cannot leave my father." The last words are spoken very low ; but he has heard them.

"Is that your only reason ?" he cries eagerly. "It is not that you do not care for me ? Do you care for me ?"

"Oh, do not ask me," cries May in a voice of distress.

"I must ask you——"

"Poor father has lived such a lonely life ever since my mother died."

"Is that your only reason ?"

"Ten long years by himself——"

"You have not answered my question."

"With no one to take care of him."

"Do you care for me ?"

"And I have been with him barely four months yet."

"Do you care for me ?"

"Oh, do not press me ; it troubles me so."

“ You give me hope.”

She gives no reply. A negative must be put into words ; silence is affirmative. His eyes brighten. He draws a long, deep breath.

“ You cannot say that you do not care for me. You have not answered that question. Do you care for me ? O Miss Wynn ! O dearest ! ”

The word startles her from her difficultly-maintained self-possession. She cannot but raise her cast-down eyes. They encounter his. It is enough. His arm is round her waist ; she is clasped to his broad, strong breast. Their lips meet, and then he lets her go. They stand speechless for a time—he drawing long, deep breaths ; she, short, hurried ones. Then he says in an undertone, as if to himself, “ Thank God.”

“ O Captain Lennox ! ”

“ Captain Lennox ! ” he cries in a tone of playful reproach and joyful, simulated indignation. “ Captain Lennox !—Philip ! ”

“ O Philip ! ” she cries, pronouncing the name, when she does pronounce it, with a lingering, timid tenderness. “ I wish you had not asked me—I wish you had never wished——”

“ Dare you say that ? Dare you say you wished we had never met ? And, having met you, how could I but desire to make you my own ? ” Thus do lovers exaggerate the attractions of the beloved one. And she is once more clasped to his bosom, and their lips meet in a longer, closer kiss.

“ But that belongs to the past. What we have to think of now is the future.”

Two hours hence it will be too hot here even for the most ardent pair of lovers ; as it is, the temperature is very high, the canopy of the wide-leaved mango-trees notwithstanding. The well-known hot wind is beginning to blow, but as yet it is only a warm breeze, and not a fiery gale. The spot is not yet unbearable, only beginning to be uncomfortable. But the lovers begin to think of the exposure, the exposure to the sun so

much dreaded in India—not for themselves, but each for the other.

“ You must not remain here any longer ”—“ I have much to say, but I must not keep you here any longer ”—they both exclaim in the same breath. “ And there is the old Khansaman going up to the house. I must not keep father waiting for his breakfast—this morning above all others,” adds May hastily.

“ You will tell him, of course——”

“ Y—e—s,” with a troubled lengthening of the word.

“ I will come up and see him after breakfast.”

“ Come out in the sun ? ”

“ Yes ; of course. I must see him at once.”

“ But you must not ride up or come in Captain Hay's dogcart ; you must get a covered carriage.” Her solicitude, needless though he may deem it, is very sweet to him.

“ I will.”

She is gone. Lennox feels that, in a strange, extraordinary sort of way, cool, hard-headed man though he is. Has he held her in his arms ? Has he kissed her ? Was it not all a dream ? His success in the struggles of war and peace has been greatly due to continued, unbroken, full command of his faculties. He has never felt confused ; his mind has never been obscured or shaken in the most critical conjuncture. But now he feels bewildered, dazed. Was it all a dream ?—that look ! those kisses ! that holding of her in his arms ! No ; there is the latch on which she had put her hand, there the mango-trees which have lent their friendly shade. No ! it is not a dream, but a splendid reality. His frame expands ; he holds his head more proudly than ever ; he strides along the pathway with a more lordly step. And when he has reached the gateway and mounted his coal-black steed—on that account, and by reason of the terror inspired by his presence, named of the frontier people “ Baba Sheitan ” (Father Satan)—he sits him with a more lordly air than ever. An easy gallop home is what “ Monarch ” (that is the horse's

real, Christian name) has expected ; this is not fray or foray time. But his master suddenly sends him dashing forward, and then reins him in ; makes him curvet and caracole, and then gives him the reins and sends him forward at his topmost speed. It is only his fierce bounding that can accord with the bounding of the rider's heart, only his mad rush that can accord with the flow of the blood in the rider's veins.

May Wynn had said that she must not delay her father's breakfast, must hurry up to the house ; but when she has passed into the quiet seclusion of the garden or orchard, thickly planted with fruit-trees, and also with trees good for shade, into which the wicket opens, she cannot but linger there for awhile to realize her new-found happiness, taste of her new-found bliss. Her heart was given to Lennox as wholly as was his to her. With a strange new tingling sensation, with a tremor and thrill never felt before, with the awakening of a new being within her, does she recall the memory of that first embrace and kiss. In that memory all things fade away. She becomes unconscious of everything else in that swoon of love, that ecstasy of joy. It is upon her even after she has left the garden and is walking toward the house, taking no note of anything about her. But the thought of her father, of what all this may mean to him, comes upon her in full strength the moment she has passed into the house. For she has entered by way of the drawing-room, and that apartment remains, has been left, has been strictly kept, exactly as it was when her mother had died, ten years before, in this very house. The constant breaking up of house and home is one of the characteristic features of the life of us poor Anglo-Indians in India. We are here to-day and gone to-morrow. There is the annual relief of regiments ; officials are continually being transferred from one station to another, or going on leave—privilege leave, sick leave, furlough ; there are visits to the hills, and the “going home” to England. The *lares* and *penates* are in a constant state of transfer from

one hand to another. Few people remain very long in one place ; but among the officials who do so are the "civil surgeons" and the chaplains. Khizrabad was not celebrated for the excellence of its climate, so the desire Mr. Wynn had to continue where he was was not interfered with by the wish of any other chaplain to take his place.

A younger son, the master hope, the strong desire of Cuthbert Wynn's life had been to pass his years by the side of the old hall, the home of his forefathers, ministering in the church in which so many of his knightly ancestors lay, among the people whose forefathers had been on the land of his forefathers for so many generations back. This family living was a poor one. His friends looked for far higher preferment for him, expected him to rise to the highest offices in the Church, because of his great attainments, because of his saintly character, because of his passionate love of his sacred calling ; but that was the desire of his own heart, his only ambition. His own wish and the hopes of his friends were alike doomed to disappointment. There came a sudden loss of health. He could not live in England, must seek a warmer climate. And so he had accepted an Indian chaplaincy. It was a terrible blow, but he bore it with the cheerful fortitude of a gentleman, the calm submission of a Christian. It was his heavenly Father's hand, let it lead him whither it would. An Englishman must not whine. But it was a severe blow, doubly severe in what it took him from and what it took him to. In those days India was a very severe place of exile for a man like him—morally, socially, intellectually. Then its severity came to be lightened for him in a way that made him bless the guiding hand. A woman of a noble and beautiful character was given to him for wife. Then came six years of perfect happiness. And then she was taken from him. Now was it harder than it had ever been before to bend the head and say, "Thy will be done." He had to send his little girl, his only child, to England. He passed into a greater loneli-

ness, a drearier solitude than ever. For three or four years it was an absolute loneliness, a complete solitude. Then, when his girl had grown older, he relieved and lightened it; he strove to prevent that estrangement between distant father and child which is the curse and canker of English life in India, by close and constant and copious communication with her. She was clever and had a gift of writing; and often, by means of writing, a closer moral and intellectual communion may be established than is possible in the ordinary, commonplace commerce of daily life. There is a restraint on speech in regard to the matters of deepest interest and concern. Then May came out to him, and her father once more enjoyed a sweet and tender and intellectual companionship—such a companionship as he above all men was most fitted to enjoy. He was relieved of his lonely solitude. Once more were his days made bright and gladsome. The improvement in his health and spirits was visible to all.

May Wynn thinks of all these things as she looks round the drawing-room, to preserve which exactly as her mother had left it had been her father's pious care, and hers too, even to the placing of the new flowers in the old places. All this had occurred to her as she had stood by the wicket. But the other love is a mighty force. To it, as the great Greek poet has it, "the Immortal and the Ephemeral yield."

"Must she leave him? How can she leave him?"

May Wynn is herself a child of Khizrabad. She was born in this very house. She had toddled about on baby legs under the shadow of the mango-trees in the little sheltered, secluded compound. Are our earliest recollections of the eye or the ear, of things seen or heard? May Wynn sometimes wondered. Was her own earliest recollection that of the little curly-tailed squirrels running about, or that of the muezzin's call? She was born beneath the shadow of the Christian church as well as beneath the shadow of the Moham-medan battlement. But there were no bells in those

days in the steeple of the church, and there had come forth from it no sounds to attach themselves to her memory. When she had returned to this house a few months before, when everything about her was so confusingly familiar and unfamiliar, when the memories of her childhood came upon her in a crowd, like a procession approaching in a confused mass, of the constituent portions of which we become cognizant only gradually; then, as she lay awake in her bed of a morning, the sound that awoke the most distant echo in her mind was not the distant, sullen roar of the morning gun, but the loud-toned chant of the muezzin, "Allah-Akber! Allah-ho-Akber!"

Bath and breakfast are over. In India the bath is taken after the morning excursion and before the second, or big, breakfast, before the quiet seclusion of the midday hours. Mr. Wynn is seated in his study, of course with a book in his hand. Against all the walls of the room are bookshelves, not "rising to the roof"—that is twenty feet overhead—but still sufficiently high to hold a great number of volumes. Around him are his books, his most familiar friends. There is not on his face the proud, or cunning, or combative, or smug, or jovial look that you so often see on that of parson or priest. It was a face expressive only of the unworldly side of his calling. It was a singularly benign and sweet and pure and saintly face. There was on it a look of absolute holiness. On the delicate and refined face had always been a spiritual look, which had been added to, intensified, by sorrow and suffering and much lonely thought. Least of all, however, was there on this face the sanctimonious look—only one of simple holiness.

The light screen of split bamboos hanging before one of the inner doorways is lifted, and May Wynn glides into the room.

"O father, something has happened!" she exclaims in a troubled voice as she comes up to the side of his chair. He has not had time to disengage his attention

from his book and give it fully to her; he has heard and understood the words, but not noticed the tone in which they are spoken.

"What is it, dear?" he asks, thinking it is some small domestic catastrophe, large to the feminine mind.

"Something that I wish—could almost wish—had never happened," she says hurriedly. "You know, father dear, that I have always longed to come out to you, and be with you, and look after you, and keep house for you, and cheer you up. I had expected to be always with you, all the time that you were out here, and then to have gone back to England with you——"

"You are not ill, child?" exclaims Mr. Wynn hastily. He has in mind his own delicate health, her mother's early death.

"Oh no, I am very well——"

She looks indeed supremely well. Never has the current of life run so strongly through her veins. Be ashamed of it, strive to ignore it, to disguise it as she may, beneath the trouble of breaking the news to her father lies a vivid, vivifying joyousness.

"Thank God for that! You have been very good to me, dear. We have been very happy together. It might have been otherwise. These long separations between parent and child are dangerous. I thank God for that happiness. But I cannot expect to have you with me always. Somebody else will some day come seeking you for his own——" (He speaks the last words playfully.) "But what has happened?"

"O father, that——"

"That! What?"

"What you are speaking about."

"I was speaking about?"

"About somebody else——"

"Ah!"

It has come on him very unexpectedly. He lived a very retired life. He did not attend those public and private gatherings at which Lennox and his daughter had so constantly met. Somebody would come for her

some day ; but so soon ! And who was it ? A shadow of anxiety passes over his face.

“ Tell me, child——”

May has knelt down by his chair ; she has placed her soft hand on his arm ; and then, with averted face, she whispers, “ Captain Lennox has proposed to me.”

She had been with him only four months of her adult life. Even what we hope and desire may sometimes come too soon. But that was not what troubled him so much as the thought of who it might be. She was a very young girl. She might have made a hasty, foolish choice. Had he been remiss in his care of her ? It would be terrible if she should have given her heart to one unworthy of her, for whom he himself could not care, of whom he could not approve.

“ Captain Lennox——” He experiences a great sensation of relief—of joy. This is a worthy choice.

“ Yes, and I wish he had not——” With her hand on her father’s arm, she is almost sincere in that utterance. “ I do not wish to leave you, dearest father. I do not wish to be parted from you. You know the dearest wish of my heart has been to live with you and cheer you, so far as I could, after all those lonely years. But what could I do when he would keep asking me if I cared for him ? ”

“ And you do care for him ? ” he says gently, laying his hand softly on her head.

“ Y—e—s. But I will not leave you, father. I told him so. I should feel faithless to myself. I love you more than any one else.”

Cuthbert Wynn looked down on the bent head, and smiled a little sadly.

“ Dear child,” he said, “ your companionship has been very sweet to me. But I shall not be sorry when it has ended—so——”

“ O father ! ”

“ I am not very old, and I have no immediate fear for myself ; but I am not very strong, and this is a land of sickness and sudden death. It will be a great com-

fort and relief to me to see you settled in a home of your own, with some one to love and protect you. I do not know Captain Lennox very well. I am afraid I have been rather neglectful of my duty in not taking more share in your amusements. But he is a man of public repute, of a well-known high character. *Sans peur et sans reproche*. I have heard the words applied to him. He is a great favourite with the Lawrences; that is a strong recommendation. He is a man of most undoubted ability. He has already made a name for himself. What little I have seen of him I have liked. You have not made me sad, but most happy, child."

"You have made me most happy too, father," whispers May; and then some tender, loving words pass between them, and then May jumps up suddenly—the lover's ear will catch the slightest sound—and, with the blood rushing up into her cheeks, exclaims,—

"He has arrived! He said he would come and see you after breakfast. You had better ask him to come in here."

The two men, suddenly made of such importance to each other, look at one another—Lennox has not seen very much of Mr. Wynn either—curiously and anxiously; anxiously, for different reasons. They form a striking contrast. The one is the very embodiment of strength and power, the other of sweetness and gentleness. And yet the gentle man has his strength, and the strong man his gentleness too. Philip Lennox was especially gentle and tender with women and with children.

"May tells me that I may look for your approval of our engagement."

"Yes," says Mr. Wynn; and the look and bearing of the man before him have pleased him so well that he holds out his hand and says, "My warmest approval."

Lennox takes the slender, delicate white hand in his own big brown one.

"I think I may safely trust the happiness of my child—my only child—in your hands."

"You may. It shall be my dearest care." Then,

after a pause: "May says she does not wish to leave you. I have no desire to hurry on the marriage."

"Let it be whenever you and May may wish. Of course, you would have to wait until the cold weather. I suppose something will have to be done in the way of clothes."

"My work in this neighbourhood will keep me here until the end of the year. I must then go back to Dera Lutfoolah Khan. It would not be easy for me to get away from there. I should like to be married before I went—about the beginning of next year."

"Yes, I should like to have had her with me for a year."

As a matter of fact, Lennox would rather have been married immediately—say in a month. He was a man of prompt action. He would have liked to have made May Wynn his own at once. But he understood what the feelings of the father and daughter would be in the matter—understood better than he would have got credit for. He had not the quick, facile sympathy of men of a nervous and imaginative temperament, which makes them enter so quickly and fully into the feelings of those they are in immediate contact with, and who, by the way, become so completely engaged with those present that they are apt to become completely disengaged from those absent. He was looked on as a harsh, hard man, one who had no care for anything but the success of an undertaking. (For want of that facile sympathy he had not been liked in his regiment. He could not run into that communion of low tastes, low pleasures, low opinions, and low thoughts which constitutes "good fellowship." He spoke out his mind. He could not abide a fool. He could not let the foul speech pass. He was quick of temper, and he had few friends, though those he had were bound to him by hooks of steel, and were men whose friendship was an honour.) Though not possessed of any excess of that imaginative sympathy referred to afore the parenthesis, and which is often more a thing of the head than of

the heart, he was quite capable of understanding what home-love meant, for he had himself felt it deeply. His mother and sister, who had made up his own early home-circle—his father had died in his infancy—had never had cause to complain of any want of affection, of loving-kindness on his part, stern though he was even in his youth. He still kept up a constant communication with them ; no pleasure was allowed to interrupt it, of course, for it was to him the greatest of pleasures ; but what was more, no work, however urgent or pressing, had been allowed to interfere with it either. He had written to his mother by every mail ever since he had come out. The only complaint his mother and sister ever had to make was of his profuse generosity towards them. (There are men cold to most without the home-circle, and very warm to all within it, as there are men the reverse.) He could understand of what depth the affection between May Wynn and her father must be.

It is with a strange sensation that May sees the two men come into the drawing-room together. There is always at first a certain awkwardness in the relationships by marriage. You have suddenly to receive a stranger, for whom possibly you yourself do not much care, as a father or as a son, as a mother or as a daughter, as a brother or as a sister. You suddenly find yourself on a kissing footing with people with whom you would only have shaken hands before, which is sometimes very pleasant, sometimes not so much so.

But the awkwardness here is soon relieved by the old Khansaman announcing that the tiffin is on the table. It is relieved by Lennox's simple, quiet acceptance of his position as a member of the household ; he does not assume any of the airs of possession to which engaged men are prone ; he does not pay May any special and pointed attention. It is set aside by the sustained flow of interesting talk between the two men, which surprises May as much as it delights her. She had not expected it ; the two men were so different. Lennox

was an outdoor man, a man of action ; Mr. Wynn was an indoor man, a man of thought. He was a student and a scholar, the other a soldier and an administrator. She had found out that Lennox—Philip now—did not care for those books of fiction and poetry in which she and her father took such delight. He did not read novels, and he did not care for poetry, except of the class represented by Scott's poems and Macaulay's "Lays of Ancient Rome ;" she had once found that he knew the noble "Ode to Duty" by heart, but he had not come across it in Wordsworth's works (which he had never read), but outside them. He was certainly not a "great reader" in the circulating library acceptance of the term. But, as a matter of fact, Lennox had read many books. And he had read to some purpose, for he had always read with a purpose—carefully, thoughtfully, in certain fixed lines, convergingly. He meant to be a great general, a great ruler. He read everything that bore on the art of war or the art of government. He had read the history of every battle, of every great campaign. He had read the life of every great commander, of every great ruler. True incidents and real characters may be as full of romance as fictitious ones. None of his reading was idle. He was not by nature a talker, but having read with a purpose, he had made all that served that purpose so thoroughly his own, had obtained so complete a mastery over it, that he speaks about it with great fluency and ease. And so there is a great flow of talk between the parson and the soldier, between the father-in-law and son-in-law to be ; and so they sat on in the dining-room for a long time after luncheon ; then they move into the cool, dark drawing-room, and after a little while Mr. Wynn retires for his usual afternoon *siesta* and the newly-engaged couple are left to themselves. A deep silence reigns around. This is the time for all cessation of work and movement, both indoors and out. To all the western doorways of the house are attached thick mattresses or screens of the sacred scented khus-khus grass,

passing through which the dry, hot gale becomes a cool and fragrant zephyr; the screens of split bamboo attached to all the doorways, inner or outer, are let down; the doors and windows are all closed, only one door on the eastern side being left open to promote a draught through the house; the blinds and curtains are all drawn. The house has been closely barricaded against the inimical heat and glare without. The drawing-room is as cool and dark and solitary as the depth of any densest bower for whispering lovers made. Amid that quiet and silence the lovers pass at once into that separate common atmosphere which is henceforth to divide them from the rest of the world. Then comes an enchanted time for them. Then comes that blissful hour which those who have known it will remember, and those who have not will imagine, better than I can tell—an hour in which the embrace and kiss of the morning were not forgotten to be repeated, I ween.

They are to ride out together in the evening; and, of course, Lennox would have dined here also, but that both May and he are going to Mr. Melvil's, who has to-night an entertainment to which the whole station is looking forward with great interest, for there is to be something unexpected and novel about it.

CHAPTER VI.

“ A HUNTING MORNING.”

THE roar of the morning-gun has rolled up to the city and passed over the nearer cantonment. Two English lads are lying asleep in the open air, side by side, on a couple of bedsteads placed on a raised circular masonry platform which stands in the centre of a little circular garden in front of a small bungalow situated at the eastern or cityward edge of the cantonment. These masonry platforms, raised a few feet above the ground so as to be above its dust and heat and above the reach of reptiles, were very common adjuncts of bungalows in those days. They were built not only for the purpose of sleeping out on at night, but of sitting out on in the cool of the evening—a form of enjoyment much in favour at a time when people did not dine late and badminton and lawn-tennis were unknown. Most delightful is that sleeping out in the open air, beneath the open vault of heaven, across which the stars and planets are making their grand procession. The boom of the morning-gun has passed over the house and rolled away over the valley of the Jumna, thinned over the vast stretch of arid fallow beyond; the morning light is increasing fast, but still the two lads lie locked in sleep.

A horseman enters the little compound, and riding into the garden and up to the platform, shouts out,—

“ What, you young scoundrels ! not up yet——”

"Is that you, Colonel?" cries a sleep-smothered, boyish voice from the nearest bedstead.

"Yes."

"On your way home, sir?"

"On my way home!"

"From a midnight carousal—from some scene of revelry——"

"Come, none of your nonsense. You know it is morning, and not night. You promised to be ready by gun-fire."

The young lad, clad in the now well-known Anglo-Indian night garb, rises up in the bed, and throwing off the sheet, his only covering, and kicking off the terrier who has shared it with him, hurls a pillow at his brother sleeper, with the cry, "Get up, Loo, you lazy beast!" The other replies with a smothered groan—a groan so monstrously deep as to be evidently of an artificial character. Then, still in the same deep voice, he chants, "You have waked me too soon; I must slumber again."

"'Tis the voice of the sleeper, I heard him complain," sings out the other lad, turning his face towards the horseman and moving his hand towards his still prone companion.

"I will give you five minutes and no more to get dressed in," says the horseman.

"Uprouse ye then, my merry, merry men!" sings the first lad, as he springs out of his bed on one side.

"For 'tis our hunting day!" sings the second as he jumps out of his bed on the other.

"Ho, Boodhun, ho!" shouts one.

"Ho, Matadeen!" shouts the other.

"Where is my sooty slave?"

"Where is my prince of darkness?"

Messrs. Walton and Hill are the junior ensigns in the 66th N.I. The former is known as Tommy, his name being Thomas, or more commonly, from his smooth and chubby countenance, as the Babe; while the pretty, girlish face of Louis Hill has procured for him the name of Louisa, shortened to Loo. The two boys are over-

flowing with youth and silliness—the undesirable combination of an old head on young shoulders does not exist in their case. They are full of fun and frolic and foolishness. The dusky valets for whom they have shouted, and who are now busy helping them to dress, are the subjects of many a jest and joke; but neither of them has ever received a painful or degrading kick or blow or buffet from “master.” “It would be cowardly to hit a fellow who cannot hit you back again,” say both the lads. They are both as gamesome as colts, but there is nothing low, or mean, or vicious, or dishonest about them.

Shall they not rejoice in their youth? Are they not lords of themselves? Are they not as lords in the land? Have they not a bamboo cart between them? Have they not bulldogs, terriers, guns? Has not each of them a pony of his own, and another between the two? Have they not a house of their own and many servants? Are they not in the Military Service of the Honourable the East India Company—well placed, made men for life? Do they not wear a sword?

They are soon dressed. They are soon hastily swallowing the tea which another of their servants, the Khidmutgar, has brought them, together with some buttered toast.

“Take something to eat,” says the horseman good-naturedly. “I will give you an extra five minutes for that. It is not good to be out in the sun on an empty stomach.”

“We have already provided against that contingency, sir,” says Tommy Walton.

“Have you? How?”

“We took something to eat a little while ago.”

“Something to eat! A little while ago!”

“Yes, and something to drink, too. We had some grilled bones——”

“Grilled bones!”

“And baked potatoes——”

“Baked potatoes!”

"With a little beer."

"Beer!"

"I took anchovy toast," says Master Hill reflectively.

"Anchovy toast! grilled bones! beer!" cries the horseman. "When?"

"At two o'clock," says Loo Hill.

"Half-past by the clock," says his companion.

"Two it was, Thomas, thou son of Didymus," rejoins his friend.

"Where?" asks the man on horseback.

"At the Mess."

"Oh, I see! you were having a little supper."

Two dapper syces, or grooms, have brought up a couple of ponies. We do not speak from any personal knowledge, but still we are perfectly sure that the visits of his Grace the Duke of Westminster to the stable of Bend Or were not more frequent, or more productive of pride and pleasure and satisfaction, than were the visits of Tommy Walton and Loo Hill to the stables of these two animals.

The three horsemen have soon reached the road which runs along the top of the Ridge, and as Colonel Grey—he has a small and slight but well-knit figure, and a bright, clever, handsome face, broad-foreheaded, blue-eyed, aquiline-nosed, broad-chinned, with a sweeping moustache curling up at the ends and yellow-coloured, of which same colour is his hair—gives the reins there to his splendid Arab horse, a dark bay with black points, they have soon passed over it. This road ends in another which leads out from the Ajmere Gate of the city. This they follow, not citywards, but the other way, countrywards, until they come to a high brick wall running along its edge. They pass in at a high gateway, by which stands a sentry. The grounds they have entered on exhibit a combination of park and garden, and, as the Babe remarks to Loo Hill, recall to mind "the Zoo:" for under these lofty trees stands a zebra, and under these other trees is chained a rhinoceros; here, in a strong wooden cage, a magnificent

Bengal tiger is pacing to and fro ; in this little tank strange water-fowl are floating or wading ; here is an aviary, there a monkey-house ; beneath these mango-trees is tethered a twelve-tined stag ; here is a black bear, with his pit and his pole ; they pass by an enclosure in which stand some spotted deer ; and in this paddock paces about that huge, strange animal, the English dray-horse. The road they are on, after winding round a large circular flower-garden, enclosed by a thick laurel hedge, leads up to the fine, tall-columned portico in front of the mansion, which, though only one-storied, well deserves for its size and stateliness the name of "mahal," or "palace," by which it is commonly known. But Colonel Grey leaves it and enters on a smaller side road which runs towards a bungalow situated in a separate corner of the grounds.

The Rajah Gunput Rao, to whom this palace belongs, is remarkable for his friendly relations with the English. He is very fond of their society, has almost daily intercourse with them ; he plays cards and billiards with them ; has coursing matches and cock-fights with them ; goes to their entertainments and gives them entertainments in return ; he often has them to live with him, but not under his own immediate roof—differences of manners and customs, and personal habits and personal requirements, social and religious prejudices, forbid that. He has had this separate bungalow built and furnished for their special use and accommodation ; here they may eat and drink and sleep in their own elaborate and uncomfortable, and in many respects to him horrible, fashion. "'Tis our hunting day !" had sung one of the light-hearted lads, and they find the hunting-party assembled in front of this bungalow—three or four of their brother officers on horseback ; natives on foot carrying rifles and guns ; shikarees, or huntsmen, with hounds in leash ; falconers with hawk on wrist ; led horses.

The stout man who is looking at the hawks and talking to the falconers is the Rajah Gunput Rao. He is a big, stout, jovial-looking man, an Eastern counterpart

in face and figure of the "Re galantuomo," the late Victor Emmanuel of Italy. His short beard is divided in the middle and brushed upwards on either side; his moustache is brushed upwards; and his nose, as would be expected from the resemblance indicated above, has a strong upward inclination too. In his dress you observe that intermingling of the East and West which is so curious and interesting to watch in India. Of course he wears a turban; so much significance is attached to the headgear that that is the last to be changed. He also wears an Oriental short jacket, and has a cummerbund round his waist; in one ear he carries a large circlet of gold wire, on which is strung one single pearl of great size, and he has a gold torque round his neck. But he also wears a pair of English-fashioned corduroy breeches and gaiters, and English-fashioned boots. He advances towards the newcomers with a light, springy gait, remarkable in a man of his size. He and Colonel Grey exchange most cordial greetings; they are great friends.

"I am afraid I am a little late," says the Colonel in the Hindustanee he speaks so well—the Rajah does not speak English. "It was these *baba logue* (children) who delayed me," pointing to the two young ensigns.

"They are indeed *baba logue*, *buchas*" (young 'uns), says the stout man, smiling. "We will now start at once."

He mounts a magnificent horse, whose condition and appointments also display the influence of Western ideas; a horse which has not been fattened up so as to resemble a beer-barrel; whose mane and tail are not plaited or his legs coloured; who does not carry a padded saddle with rope reins and a broad standing martingale of cloth; who has his ribs just showing, with a coat like satin, and who bears an English hunting-saddle. The Rajah sits him well. When the cavalcade reaches the gateway it is joined by a light bamboo cart, drawn by a pair of small bullocks. On this sits, chained and hooded, the hunting-leopard, to witness whose performances is

one of the chief objects of their coming together this morning.

They proceed along the Ajmere road for about a mile, until they arrive at the edge of the huge, barren plain extending over many a mile, which is to be the scene of the sport, if they are fortunate enough to get any. They are to be so fortunate; the Rajah scans the plain through a pair of English binoculars, and immediately announces that there is a large herd of antelope upon it, not very far off. They all dismount; only the Rajah and his English guests and the cart with the leopard and its attendants move forward on to the plain; the grooms, and horses, and dogs, and falconers, and all the other attendants are left in the shelter and concealment of the magnificent avenue of trees by the side of the road. Now they have come in sight of the herd of antelopes. It is a large one. As usual, the females with their young keep together in a close mass; the young bucks form small separate herds, and the old "black" bucks move about by themselves in solitary grandeur. Two of these, whose tall, spirated horns and jet-black sides are indicative of their age and of the strength and wariness which have enabled them to keep the horns on their heads so long, are engaged in a fierce combat—perhaps for the possession of a lovely young fawn, perhaps for the possession of a bit of green herbage, just now rare—and the quick, sharp strokes of their horns resound over the plains like the clatter of single-sticks. But at sight of the cart, perhaps at smell of its occupant, they disengage, and with a bound or two into the air rush swiftly away.

The Rajah now manœuvres the cart, which he directs himself, so as to get it near to a fine young buck feeding by himself on the plain. He makes all the natives move on the side of the cart towards the animal, while all the Englishmen, who are more likely to startle him, walk on the other. He does not, of course, direct the cart straight at the buck, but edges up to him gradually, making him believe that the cart is moving towards

another point of the plain. The young buck is feeding eagerly ; he has come to a little cup in the plain in which the herbage is soft and succulent ; he is perhaps apprehensive that a bigger buck may come and drive him away—he must make the most of his opportunity. The Rajah gives a signal. The cart is stopped, the hood is whipped off the leopard's head, the quick-eyed beast has caught sight of the quarry and leaped noiselessly to the ground, and begins to move towards the antelope with soft, soundless footfall. Now is the moment of excitement. Will he get near enough to make his rush ? His gleaming eyes are fixed intently on the feeding antelope ; he moves with long, slow, silent footsteps, his tail straight out and slightly raised, the mane or ruff of hair, which procured for his tribe the name of Leo, erect and bristling. The cart had been stopped about one hundred and fifty yards from the antelope. The leopard has got over a third of that distance before the antelope has become aware of his presence. The young buck starts, he moves away a little. The leopard begins to trot, then to canter—both soundless. The antelope now darts away at fullest speed, and the leopard makes his rush, flies after him with inconceivable rapidity. The speed of both is now, indeed, by actual timing, greater than that of any other four-footed animals on the face of the earth—greater than that of horse or greyhound. The leopard has reached, has struck ; they are both on the ground together.

The Rajah and the others rush forward. The swift-footed, excited English lads are the first to reach the struggling pair ; but they start back, absolutely appalled, from the ferocious gleam in the leopard's eyes that greets their near approach. The deer, a fine, strong young animal, is still full of life and strength, but he is so paralyzed by fear, that deadliest of the emotions, that he lies quite still while the leopard is pressing him to the ground—mark the flaccid relaxation of the body of the one animal, the fierce straining of every limb of the other—and driving his long, sharp fangs deeper into

his throat. But now the leopard's keepers have come up. They cut the antelope's throat and receive the jetting stream in the large wooden ladle the leopard is usually fed from, and then hold the warm fluid under the leopard's nose, so that the reek of it rises up into his brain. He relaxes his deadly grip, lets go, and begins to lap eagerly at the warm, rich fluid, still glowing with life. While so engaged the hood is once more drawn over his head and the collar put round his neck. The antelope is dismembered. The limb first cut off is held close to the bowl, which the leopard has no sooner emptied and licked quite dry than he seizes on the meat with a vice-like grip; the two men holding the two chains attached to the collar pull them taut, so that the leopard can only move backward and forward; the man holding the joint of venison by the bone draws the growling, purring beast gently to the cart and then lets it go; the leopard leaps on to the cart, the chains are secured, and he is left to devour his lump of flesh.

The horses are again mounted, for the next sport to be indulged in is that of hawking. The falconers, men of great importance at the courts of Eastern princes, as they were once at the courts of Western monarchs too, now come forward. Each of them carries on his wrist a hooded peregrine, the noblest of the tribe. The chief falconer carries the falcon, the female bird, while his assistant carries the smaller, the less strong, the less fierce male bird, the tiercel. The latter is thrown at the small birds they find on the plain, and affords many an amusing, if not very long or very exciting, gallop. Walton and Hill enjoy the sport, which they are engaged in for the first time, immensely. When the birds skim along the surface of the ground it resembles that of coursing. This goes on for some time; but no opportunity has been afforded for the nobler kind of sport attendant on the flying of the falcon, and the Rajah is getting impatient. He is very proud of his falcon, and wishes to display its performances. But at length the wished-for quarry presents itself. They sight a large,

black-backed crane, standing quite still, with its head buried in its shoulders, and looking in this attitude very much like a man in a long-tailed coat. The chief falconer unhoods the falcon and sets her free. She sights the crane and darts towards it. The crane, too, has sighted the coming foe, but with its heavy body it takes it some time to launch itself into the air. First it has to run, and then half run, half fly for some distance before it can gain the impetus needed to do so. In the meanwhile the falcon is rushing toward it through the air, the horsemen along the surface of the earth. But no sooner has the crane himself quitted the earth than he proceeds to try and place himself at once as high above it as he can. He plies his broad pinions and goes rising in circles higher and higher into the air. And the falcon goes soaring up after him. It is a pretty sight. And now the sport no more resembles that of coursing. You can no longer ride with your eyes scanning the ground as well as the birds. Now is the time of danger and excitement. You must ride with your eyes fixed high up in the air, blindly trusting only to your horse. Down come Tommy Walton and his pony ; the Babe is much bruised and shaken, the surface of the plain being as hard as a prison-yard or brickfield. But he is up and off again in an instant ; nothing short of a broken neck would have prevented him from mounting again. And still the birds are striving to outsoar one another. At length the peregrine has gained the ascendant, the point of advantage, and drops like a thunderbolt on the big, awkward bird beneath. She is almost on the top of the crane ; it seems as if she must strike it and bring it to the ground ; but, impelled by the imminence of the peril, worked on by the strong instinct of self-preservation, the crane performs a most extraordinary movement ; he doubles up his wings and legs and neck and makes a turn in the air ; the falcon has missed her aim, lost her chance, her advantage, for, unable to stop herself, having fallen like a stone, she continues to descend fathoms deep towards the earth.

The potent force of gravity is no longer an ally but an enemy, no longer with her but against her. The crane pursues his onward way with renewed vigour, plying his big wings hard to make the most of his advantage. But the falcon is a princely one; she rallies splendidly; she regains her position by a quick upward shoot, and soon begins to recover the distance she has lost. And now both birds are doing their best, and the horsemen have to do their best too to keep them in view.

"Tally-ho!" shrieks the Babe.

"Yoicks! yoicks!" yells Loo Hill.

How their heels are working at their ponies' sides! They are wild with excitement. So furious and fearless is the riding of both of them that they by no means occupy a rearmost rank among the rushing horsemen. Once it had seemed as if the birds must get out of sight even of the Rajah and Colonel Grey, who, racing one another, are well ahead of the others. But now the flight of the birds gets slower. The falcon has regained the superior position, the upper place, and is now floating over the crane, and making short dashes at it whenever its defensive, upturned bill is for a moment diverted. Floating feathers indicate a successful hit, and each dash makes the crane descend a few yards from its lofty course. At last the crane begins to make for the earth in a long descending line. The birds are then lost to view of all. They have been marked down. But when the horsemen arrive at the spot where they fell they cannot see them or find them. They had evidently descended in a narrow belt of jungle bordering a little drainage line which pursued its devious course across the plain; the crane had evidently made for the shelter of the jungle. "I saw them fall behind this tree," says Colonel Grey, "and I rode straight for it." But the men on foot have come up too, and still the search—even the eager search of Tommy Walton and Loo Hill—has not proved successful. A jackal or fox may go to earth, but the birds must be above ground.

“She must be found,” says the Rajah. The falcon has cost him a great deal of money, but that is not what he is thinking of: it will be so difficult to get another one like her; she is a bird of such rare strength and spirit and training. And so a more strict and systematic search is entered upon. “Here they are!” at length cries one of the falconers in a joyful voice. They all crowd to the spot. There, down in the narrow drainage channel, is the crane leaning against one of its sides, dead beat; while the falcon is hopping around it, and making feeble, vicious clutches at it, which the crane is feebly warding off. Neither seems capable of flying another yard. The falconers jump down and seize the crane, and are about to wring its neck, when the Rajah cries out,—

“No, do not kill it. Carry it up to the palace. Let it be kept as a memorial of this splendid run.”

The falcon, too, has been secured. The run has brought them back to the Ajmere road. It has been a long and fast one: men and horses are bathed in sweat; the clothes of the riders are, in fact, as thoroughly drenched as if they had been caught in a heavy shower. It is a morning in May. The sun is getting overhead. The sweet coolness of the morning has passed away; the hot discord of the day is about to begin. They have not made any use of the guns and rifles they have brought out; but they can enjoy that kind of sport any day. They determine to take advantage of the road, and return home in the as yet cool shade of the umbrageous avenues which border it on both sides.

CHAPTER VII.

AN UNPLEASANT QUESTION.

THE Rajah Gunput Rao is in high good-humour as he and Colonel Grey ride in the cool shade side by side and talk over the incidents of the run. The talk about that has ended, but the look of joy and satisfaction still lingers on the Rajah's face. He is lounging easily in his saddle. His horse is a splendid walker. The Rajah's intercourse with the English has been greatly promoted by his love of horses ; he himself, notwithstanding his bulk, is an excellent horseman. It is an inherited accomplishment, he being a Mahratta by birth. He is a great patron of the turf ; has himself an excellent stable. He recalls how in that splendid run he had held his own against Colonel Grey, notwithstanding the great difference of weight between them ; and hence the continuance of the look of satisfaction on his face. But a swift and sudden and curious change comes over it when Colonel Grey breaks the silence by asking, " Rajah Sahib, what did the Nana Sahib go to Lucknow for the other day ? "

The face loses the frank, open expression, and becomes secret and close. There is on it a sudden cunning, crafty look, which descends on it like a veil, like a thing from without ; it does not seem natural and innate. There is a professional, a tribal, and a national as well as an individual look. The open, good-humoured look on the Rajah's face is his own individual one ; this cunning, crafty look the tribal one. Those were the two

main characteristics of the Mahratta race. Its power had first risen by their exercise ; they had always characterized, not only their dealings in peace, but also their operations in war. Gunput Rao is a cousin of that Dhondoo Punt, more commonly known as the Nana Sahib, whose name is destined to stand out in letters of blood in the annals of the coming year.

" Oh ! " says the Rajah, " merely on a pleasure trip—to amuse himself."

" He went to Calpee, and then he came here on a visit to you, when I had the pleasure of making his acquaintance," says Colonel Grey as he lights a cigar ; " and now he has gone to Lucknow. I do not suppose he has made so many journeys in his life before."

" Since his uncle's death he is master of his own movements," says the Rajah quickly. " He has greater command of money. He goes about to amuse himself—to see new places."

" I can understand his going to Lucknow or coming here to amuse himself ; but to go to Calpee ! "

Calpee was an out-of-the-way place, a decayed old town.

The Rajah's face is still more ruffled. He does not like this questioning, more especially at the present time. We have to explain the reasons for this.

In the course of the eighteenth century the Mahrattas had become the leading Hindu power in India, and on the decay of the Mogul Empire it seemed as if they were about to re-establish the ancient Hindu sovereignty in the land. It was with the Mahrattas, and not with the Mohammedans, that we fought for supremacy. Their power had been founded by the cruel and crafty Sivaji, but had begun to decline in the hands of his feeble descendants, when it was reinvigorated and placed on a more lasting basis by the genius of a servant of the State, who rose to be Peishwa, or Prime Minister. The power of the Peishwas continued to increase, that of Sivaji's descendants, the princes of Sattarah, to decline. Other great leaders (and marauders) arose. They carved out kingdoms for themselves, and extended the Mahratta

confederacy ; but the Peishwa still continued to be recognized as the head of the commonwealth, as the centre of national unity. In the year 1818 the Peishwa, Bajee Rao, was defeated by the English, and surrendered to them. He was deprived of his throne and kingdom, but he was allowed a pension, and within the limits of the small estate assigned to him at Bithoor, near Cawnpore, he was allowed to exercise sovereign rights ; he was also allowed to retain his title. Many held that he was treated with excessive and foolish liberality. An Eastern conqueror would have slain him and all belonging to him, thus preventing all future complications : " stone dead hath no fellow." Bajee Rao lived to see the English, with whom he had struggled on no unequal terms for the sovereignty of India, extend their power completely over the whole of the great peninsula. He did not die until the year 1851, only six years before the present time. He died childless, but he had adopted Dhondoo Punt, his nephew, known therefore as the Nana Sahib, as his son, and had besought the English Government to let this adoption make Dhondoo Punt heir to his title and pension, as well as to his private estate. In his will he had named Dhondoo Punt " sole master of the throne and the dominions of the Peishwa." The East India Company, however, declined to continue to the Nana Sahib the title or the pensions, though it allowed him to retain the rent-free estate near Cawnpore. The Nana Sahib contended " that though the pension was a poor equivalent for the revenues of a kingdom, yet it was in common equity payable so long as those revenues were retained ; " that to withhold the title and pension was to invalidate the act of adoption, and thereby " abrogate the Hindu sacred code and interdict the practice of the Hindu religion ; " but he pleaded and contended in vain.

Two years before that time the principality of Satarah, ruled over by the descendants of Sivaji, whose princes therefore formed the " royal house " of the Mah-rattas, had been annexed by the British, on the death of the Rajah without " male heirs of the body ; " three

years after it the principality of Nagpore was annexed for a similar reason, "by right of lapse." Within five years three of the great Mahratta houses had been extinguished by the English. The small principality of Jhansi, to whose chiefs we had ourselves given an independent status, had also during the same period been absorbed into the Company's dominions for a similar reason—failure of heirs of the body. The Ranee of Jhansi, only twenty-two years of age, but a woman of strong, fierce character, who subsequently fell fighting against us in the field, protested vehemently against this annexation as a most unjust and arbitrary measure. Now, the Ranee of Jhansi and the Nana Sahib, and the Rajah Gunput Rao, who has just shown his English friends so excellent a morning's sport, were nearly connected; and Calpee lies midway between Cawnpore and Jhansi, and Gunput Rao knows well enough why the Nana Sahib had gone there. And so Colonel Grey's persistent questioning on that point disturbed him, more especially at this time—more especially to-day. More especially now, when the increasing spirit of mutiny in the sepoy army held out a hope of being able to overturn the English power to the many desirous of doing so: to the Mohammedans desirous of restoring their supremacy, political and religious; to the Brahmins, fearing the loss of their ancient power; to the representative of the Great Mogul, the King of Delhi, hopeful of the re-establishment of the ancient imperial position of his house; to the King of Oudh, desirous of regaining his kingdom; to the semi-independent lawless Barons of Oudh and elsewhere—birds of prey, who found themselves restricted in the use of beak and claw, turned into domestic fowl; to the Mahrattas, whose great commonwealth had begun to be dismembered. More especially to-day, when a band of emissaries, sent forth to stir up and foment the feeling of antagonism to the English power, is to arrive in Khizrabad, and one of the chief of them, a Mahratta, sent forth from the palace of the Nana Sahib at Bithoor, is to put up with himself.

But Colonel Grey had put the question casually, idly, of no set purpose. Ere the Rajah, considering how to do so, can answer it, Colonel Grey has put him another, connected with a subject of much more interest to the English people of Khizrabad than the movements of the Nana Sahib—namely, the anticipated deficiency of the ice in the pits.

And now they have reached the gateway of the Rajah's palace, and the English officers take leave of him, after thanking him most heartily for the excellent morning's sport he has shown them.

CHAPTER VIII.

CONSPIRATORS.

THE three travellers whom we saw crossing the bridge of boats have reached the River Gate ; they pass in—the sepoy standing on guard there looking curiously at them—and they move up the road leading from it to Star Street. That famous thoroughfare is crowded from end to end, for these cool early morning hours have to be taken advantage of for business or amusement. It presents a very picturesque sight. It has not the gay tulip-bed look it has on a gala day, when the people come out in their many-hued holiday attire ; but the crowd presents a brighter appearance than does any outdoor gathering of our own dark-clad countrymen. The sweetmeat-makers are busy disposing of their luscious wares ; the money-changers sit cross-legged behind their heaps of shells and silver and copper coins ; the cloth merchants recline by the side of their bales and bundles ; the silver-smiths are at work on their little anvils ; the brazier and coppersmith sits in the midst of his pots and pans and cauldrons ; the grain-dealer is weighing out wheat and barley with a great pair of leather scales ; sepoys saunter about with a lordly air and browbeat the shopkeepers and ogle the women ; crows are cawing, kites keening, sparrows pecking at the heap of grain, from which the passing Brahminy bull takes a leisurely mouthful ; the water-carriers move about, bent double under the weight of the goatskin bags they carry across their loins, and tinkle their little brass cups and cry, “ Water for the

thirsty! water!" Pariah dogs prowl about. "Remember the poor! Feed the hungry! Take thought of the needy! In the name of God!" shout the beggars. Women pass to and fro with faces veiled or unveiled. Loiterers loiter about, and the buyers are busy buying.

The travellers make their way through the busy throng of Star Street until they come to a cross street leading to the Ajmere Gate. This they follow until they arrive at a large square building lying just within the gate. They pull up before it, and, after exchanging a few words, the Mahratta moves on with his own following and passes out of the Ajmere Gate, so leaving the city again: his destination is the palace of his fellow-countryman, the Rajah Gunput Rao; the others pass into the big building. By the large open space within and the encircling rows of rooms; by the scattered groups of people; by the bales and bundles; by the rows of horses; by the kneeling camels; by the carts and bullocks; by the cinder-heaps and dungheaps; by the stinks and stench; by the swarm of flies—you know this to be a serai, a word perhaps better known to the English reader as caravan-serai.

The boom of the gun on the ridge has proclaimed the midday hour. Its reverberation does not now, like the previous one, pass through a cool, fresh atmosphere, but through one glowing and quivering with heat. As its first report was the signal for the commencement of work and movement, so is this for their cessation. The public offices which were opened at six o'clock are now closed. All the English women and children and most of the men have retired into the innermost recesses of their close-shut, darkened bungalows. The roads and streets are deserted. The fiery hot wind is blowing from the west, the fierce sunshine pouring down in fiery deluge. Heat and dust and glare usurp the day. Even the pariah dogs and the crows seek the shade; the sparrow sits with open beak. Only the kites continue to circle in the fiery air, amidst the fierce turmoil of the sunshine, and mingle their shrill cries with the rushing of the wind.

Usually at this hour quiet and stillness reign over the lines of the various sepoy regiments; the sepoy has bathed at the well, and prepared his little plot of ground—which then becomes holy ground, on which no rajah or nuwâb, not even the Governor-General himself, may even so much as let his shadow fall—and cooked his food and eaten it, giving the fragments to the attendant crows and sweepers, and scoured his brass vessels, and smoked his hooqah, and gone into his little hut to pass away the afternoon hours in sleep. But to-day at the lines of two of the regiments, the 66th and 76th, there is an unusual bustle and movement, an unusual issuing forth of men. And there is also, for the midday hour, an unusual bustle at the gate of the serai, an unusual passing in of men; and these men all have the unmistakable look and air of sepoys.

These caravanserais are generally miserable buildings. But this one forms an exception to the rule. It had been built as an act of public beneficence by one of the princesses of the royal house of Khizrabad in the day of its power and glory. The gateway in the centre of the side facing the road was a fine one, and in the centres of the other three sides of the square enclosure were fine large blocks of buildings intended for the use of the better class of travellers. These contained some fine large rooms. On a raised daïs at the end of one of these apartments sit the two travellers, the burly Mohammedan and the Hindu with a military air, together with another Hindu and another Mahomedan. The latter is named Rustum Khan (after the great Rustum), and is the Soubahdar Major, or senior native officer, of the 66th; while the other, named Matadeen Panday, holds a similar position in the 76th, the regiment to which William Hay, engaged and about to be married to Beatrice Fane, belongs. The faces of the two men present a striking contrast. The Mohammedan has a full low forehead, large full eyes, a large hooked nose, full cheeks, a large-lipped mouth, a full broad chin. The Hindu has a high forehead, very hollow over the eyes, very protuberant above;

small deep-set eyes; a long thin nose running a little awry; hollow cheeks; a thin-lipped mouth and a long pointed chin. On both a look of self-satisfaction; the one bold and jovial, the other sharp and shrewish.

There is a continual stream of men passing into the apartment; sepoys who squat themselves down on the floor, native officers who are presented to Mehndi Ali Khan, the Mohammedan traveller, and find a seat on the daïs or on rude wicker-work stools. It is easy to see that Mehndi Ali Khan is a man of rank, a man of very different stamp from all about him, who are all, even the officers, peasant born. His mode of speech is different from theirs; he gives to the words derived from the Persian and Arabic in their common Hindustanee the proper original pronunciation; he says *zuroor* and *zahir*, while they say *juroor* and *jahir*; he gives to the oft-used word *maloom* (known) its deep guttural sound. There is a certain courtly grace in his bearing. He had held high offices at the Court of Delhi; he had represented the Nuwâb of Lucknow at Calcutta, until the fiat of the East India Company had extinguished the kingdom of Oudh and his own office with it. He was one of the most trusty and devoted adherents of the deposed Nuwâb of Lucknow, or King of Oudh, as we had made him, now himself resident in Calcutta under surveillance, his kingdom shrunk to a park. Mehndi Ali Khan was now acting as the emissary of the plotting monarch, or rather of his plotting family.

The apartment is now quite full.

"We are all of one breath here?" (*humdum*—of one breath—conspirators), says Mehndi Ali, looking around him.

"All"—"All"—"All."

"There is no one here who is likely to betray us?"

"Not one."

"We have sworn by the Koran," says a Mohammedan.

"We have lifted the Ganges water," says a Hindu.

"Then say what you have to say," goes on Mehndi Ali, turning to his Hindu fellow-traveller, lately the

senior native officer of the 19th Regiment of Native Infantry, disbanded for mutiny three months before.

"I have little to say. All you who hear me know why five hundred Brahmins like myself, three hundred Rajpoots of high caste, have been deprived of their daily bread and turned adrift on the world after they had served the English Government for many years, in many places, where neither air nor water was conformable—in many campaigns, on many battlefields. Why? Because they would not pollute themselves, because they would not lose their caste—their religion. Five hundred Brahmins—three hundred Rajpoots! Would not you have done the same? What is there a man will balance or measure against his religion? Not the weight of gold or silver, not the length of life. What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his caste? Will you lose your caste or keep it?"

"Keep it!"—"Keep it!"

"All that I have to say to you is this: I have journeyed from Calcutta to here. I have been to every station where sepoy regiments are quartered; been in the lines of thirty or forty regiments. They are all of the same mind. They will not let themselves be the victims of this base and cruel treachery. They will not let their caste be filched from them; they will not let their religion be stolen from them. They are firmly of one mind. I have seen many kings and princes and noblemen, rajahs and nuwâbs and taluqadars and great zemindars. They are all of one mind. The reign of the English must cease. I have seen the people in the country and in the towns and cities. They are all of one mind. The reign of the English must cease. There may be some who do not wish to go against the English because of fear. Let them know that the fear is on the other side. It will be better for those who go against them than for those who side with them." He ceases, and there is an interval of silence.

Then a man in the assembly says, "The whole intention of the Government is to take away our caste. They

have ordered bone-dust to be mixed with the flour ground at their mills."

"And fat to be mixed with the *ghce*" (clarified butter, an article of daily consumption), cries another excitedly.

"And bone-dust to be mixed with the salt," cries a third.

"Faugh!"—"Phew!"—"What villainy!"—"What damage!"—"How terrible!"—"God preserve us!"

"And it is said that the flesh of cows and pigs is to be thrown into the wells," cries a fat-faced, goggle-eyed young recruit.

"*Yah Illahi!*" (O God!) cry the Mohammedans; "*Ay Purmesur!*" (O God!) cry the Hindus, in one breath.

And then a silence of horror and disgust falls upon them. The horror and disgust find expression otherwise than by words. Heads are shaken; faces twitch; finger-joints are cracked; eyes are shut; some sniff strongly through the nose; some bend the head or turn it over the shoulder; mouths work; those near the walls spit under them.

"These things cannot be endured," says one man.

"They cannot be suffered," says another.

"Of course not," says a third; "how can we live without flour and salt?"

"And without water we are dead," cries the goggle-eyed young recruit.

"Yes; the whole intention of the English Government is to take away our religion and caste, to make us Christians. The new Governor-General has come out with express orders from the Queen to do this," says the ex-Soubahdar of the lately disbanded 19th. "He has passed a law permitting Hindu widows to marry; and the children of the shameful women who do so are not to forfeit their rights of inheritance—nor those Hindus who become Christians—as has been the law hitherto. The English officials have now withdrawn from the care and management of the endowments of our temples,

from the management of our great religious festivals, in order that these may suffer. They write books in favour of their own religion and against ours. Some officers even preach. English schools rise up everywhere.” —“ They have reduced, or taken away altogether, the endowments of our mosques and colleges,” puts in a Mohammedan.—“ And ceased to maintain our *Kazis* as State officials, so that our marriages are hardly legal,” interpolates another.—“ They are establishing girls’ schools.” —“ They wish to do away with the *pardah* (veil-screen) and the *zenana*, so that our women may go about in the shameless way their own do.”

“ All these things prove the same intention,” says the ex-Soubahdar. “ Formerly,” he goes on, “ the service of the Company was a good service. The sepoy had not to go far from Ganges or Jumna. Now he is sent thousands of miles away, into strange and terrible places—is made to cross the sea. He gets no extra pay for doing so. He loses half his leave in getting to his house. Formerly he had special privileges, about his cases in court, about his letters, and in many other ways. These have all been taken away from him. There is now no gain in belonging to the service; rather loss. Nothing can weigh against the loss of one’s caste. It certainly is not worth while to lose it for the sake of the Company’s service.”

“ When the rule of the English has been set aside and that of the King of Delhi re-established,” says Mehndi Ali Khan quietly, in his smooth, fluent voice, as if the change were a mere matter of course, “ the sepoy may have to go to other parts of India in case of a campaign, but he will not have to cross the sea, and he will always be quartered near his own home. He will enjoy all the privileges he ever enjoyed under the Company, and more; he will be favoured and cherished as a soldier should be. And he will then be able to attain to those higher ranks which the English people now keep greedily to themselves. They will then become captains and majors and colonels.”

"That would be very agreeable," says the Soubahdar Matadeen Panday, with a sarcastic intonation in his voice, and poking his long chin forward in a way he has. "But it may not be so easy to overturn the power of the English. They are great fighters. They have no fear. They are very brave and very crafty."

"Can we not be crafty too—and brave? Have we no manhood?" says Mehndi Ali Khan. "Why, Soubahdar Sahib, have you not yourself displayed great valour on the battlefield? And I think you can be crafty too," he adds, looking at him significantly. Then turning his face again towards the men in the hall, and waving his hand towards them, he exclaims in a louder tone of voice than he habitually uses,—

"Are you funk-sticks?" (so only can his colloquial expression of *dur-phunkna* be translated.) "Do you allow that you are cowards—chicken-hearted—lily-livered. Are you brave men or cowards?—say."

"Brave men!" they shout.

"Of course," says Mehndi Ali Khan. He knew how to address himself to the braggadocio spirit of the sepoys. "All that is needed is that the whole army should be of one mind, one heart. Let all the regiments rise together against the English, and they will be swept away as a bank of earth is swept away by the Jumna when it rises in flood."

The conference has ended. Even Mehndi Ali's Hindu fellow-emissary has retired to his own apartment. There are now on the dais only Mehndi Ali and his co-religionist, Rustum Khan, the Soubahdar Major of the 66th.

"Did you observe how that dog of an infidel—that idolater of a Matadeen Panday—wanted to argue against me?" says Mehndi Ali.

"Yes," says Rustum Khan, "he is of a crooked disposition; he would do so merely to trouble you, but he also wished to enhance the value of his services——"

"But will the unbeliever be with us when the day of action comes?"

"He is a Brahmin, and therefore crafty—a trickster.

But, as I said, he wished to enhance the value of his services. They are to be bought."

"Ha!"

"But he can now expect nothing more from the English but his pension. Let him be paid a sum that will satisfy him for the loss of that, and he will be with us."

"It shall be looked to. And you will tell the Sikunder Begum why I could not wait on her. I must leave for Abdoolapore early this evening. It is necessary for me to be there early to-morrow morning. I do not know what course of action the decision of the court-martial may necessitate. You will tell her?"

"Yes——"

"You will be sure to see her to-night?"

"Yes," says Rustum Khan with a smile.

"Of course, yes," says Mehndi Ali, also with a smile.

The other, the Mahratta traveller, is now seated by the side of Gunput Rao on the dais in the Rajah's own private apartment, on which he, the Rajah, passes most of his indoor hours. For this dais supplies to him the place of bedstead, sofa, settee, chairs, and tables; serves him for bedroom, drawing-room, library, study. A carpet is a house in the East. In this huge apartment there is no other piece of furniture but this dais, with the exception of the globular earthenware jar for water with a silver cup on the top of it which stands in one corner. There is a very handsome carpet on the large square dais, but none on the cemented floor. That bare room gives the key to the economic condition of India. There the secondary wants have not yet been developed. There money is not spent on the purchase of numerous articles of convenience and comfort, and so usefully distributed, but on the purchase of a few articles of luxury, on jewellery and gems—wasted on a numerous retinue of idle retainers, in marriage ceremonies, in donations to priests—or hoarded, buried in the ground. That hoarding has gone on to an enormous extent during the past fifty—more especially during the past thirty (post-

Mutiny)—years ; an enormous quantity of the precious metals has been withdrawn from circulation, and this doubtless has had its effect on the present disastrous disturbance of the relative values of gold and silver. When the use of knife and fork and spoon, of crockery and glass, becomes general in India, this will have a great effect on its social condition, on the caste system, even perhaps on its religious systems—a great one on its economic conditions. Imagine how the demand for such articles will be increased, how much useful industry will be set in motion ! But to return to our narrative—only stating, on the other side, that the large empty apartment has a calm repose and dignity of its own, and that its bareness makes it more cool and airy—things very desirable, at this season of the year at all events.

The Mahratta traveller was the visitor, the emissary of the Nana Sahib, whom the Rajah Gunput Rao has been expecting, which expectation had caused Colonel Grey's questions about the Nana Sahib to be so disturbing to him this morning.

The visitor, the emissary, presents in his person a strong contrast to his host : the Rajah is big and burly, of a fine stately presence ; his newly-arrived guest, a small, slight, insignificant-looking man. But insignificant-looking as he is, this man, Tantia Topce, is to prove himself the only good commander on the side of the mutineers, the only one to display any dash or generalship in the field, the only one to inflict a reverse on the British arms. The complete absence of capable leaders, civil or military, on the side of the rebels and mutineers was to prove one of the most notable features of the coming great convulsion.

"That is all that we wanted ; the English Government has done for us what we could not have done for ourselves—it has passed the weapons from its own hand into ours. It has made its army over to us"—the little man was saying—"its well-trained army, the source of its power. The English have turned the heart of the sepoy against them ; done it the only way they could,

by setting his religion against his self-interest. We have a great army ready made—infantry, cavalry, guns; three great armies. We seize the fortresses. We are masters of the land.”

“Yes; but they will send an army from England to reconquer it.”

“By the time they can do so we shall have possession of the whole country, and all three great armies at our command. When this Bengal army has risen, those of Madras and Bombay will be sure to do so too. I do not think much of the Madras sepoys, but the cavalry is very good. The arsenals are full of the munitions of war. And what army could the English send? One that would not be half the size of any one of these three. Azeemoola-Khan, who visited their camp, has told me how small was the army they could send against the Russians four years ago. No; they have been able to conquer and keep India only by means of their great sepoy army—by disciplining it carefully and arming it well.”

“And leading it.”

“We shall find leaders, men like Holkar and Scindiah. *I* will be a leader. We can employ other Europeans, Italians and Frenchmen, as we did before; capable men, such as Perron and De Boigne.”

“But all this will end in putting the King of Delhi on his throne again, in restoring the sovereignty of the Mussulmans.”

“That must be done at first. We must set up the King of Delhi against the English. His name is still a potent force. But we should have our own power restored. We should regain our lost principalities of Satarah, Nagpore, Jhansi, and re-establish the supreme power of the Peishwas. The English got rid of, other arrangements can be made hereafter. We might keep the King of Delhi on the throne and appoint our Peishwa his guardian, as he was but a few years ago. But why should not we Mahrattas assume the supreme power? Almost the whole land was tributary to us. We should

extend our possessions, found new kingdoms, as Holkar and Scindiah did. Why should not you and I become independent chieftains too ? I should like to have the Punjâb for my kingdom. I should lead an army thither and seize it. Oh, to lead armies and rule kingdoms, and not to be nobody as now ! ”

The little man has a large ambition.

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE MALL.

At last ! The tyranny is overpast ! The fierce turmoil of the sunshine is over. The grievous day is done. The joyful hours of darkness are at hand. The evening-time is short, but it is cool and pleasant. People rush out to enjoy it.

Every English person in Khizrabad is now preparing to come forth from the dank confinement of the darkened bungalows. Before each bungalow stands a vehicle of some kind, or a horse.

Philip Lennox is standing in the pretty porch of Mr. Wynn's house, by the side of his splendid coal-black charger and of May Wynn's pony. He is patting that honest but ugly beast—he is a hill pony, and therefore not handsome—affectionately. Does he not carry his lady-love, the sweetest lady upon the earth ? And now May Wynn herself comes forth, bright and fair as the dawn. And now Lennox is helping her to mount. What a thrill passes through his frame as he feels the touch of her little foot on his hand ! And May Wynn, too, thinks that she has never been helped to mount so delightfully before : so gently and yet so firmly, so exactly well. The strong men shoot you up too fast, and the weak men lug you up too slowly ; but here was an exact adjustment of strength. That was a hand to be trusted to.

They have ridden through the English quarter. They have passed out at the Jumoo Gate. The portion of the fine road leading out of that gateway which lies between

it and the cantonment forms the Khizrabad Mall. The wide width of the metalled centre which forms the carriage-drive, the earthen tracks between the beautiful avenues of trees on either side, one of which is used as a walk and the other as a ride, are all three carefully watered, and hence the natives call the Mall the *Thundee Suruk* (the "cool road"). How delightfully cool and fresh it is! How sweet the fragrance of the water-sprinkled earth!

May Wynn has on a linen riding-habit, and her pony has a big barrel and short legs and a very shaggy mane, and so the comparison that has often suggested itself to Lennox before occurs to him again.

"I am riding by the side of Una on her lion," says he, gazing tenderly into her eyes.

"And I am riding by the side of Sir Launcelot," she says, gazing softly into his.

Ah, those first dear looks of love, into which the veiled future throws its deep and tender spirit!

They see young Walton and young Hill coming quietly down the ride in the distance, and then they see them suddenly put their ponies in motion and come rushing towards them at racing speed.

"I have won it!" cries the pretty, girl-faced Louisa Hill, as he pulls up a little in front of them; "I have won it! I am to be the first to congratulate you, Miss Wynn."

"Oh, thank you," cries May in her soft, sweet, tender voice. Her cheeks were always pale, and have become the paler by reason of even these few months in India; but now there is on them a tender rosy tint like the earliest blush of dawn—bright presage, friendly hearts would have said, of a coming glorious day.

"But is it so indeed?" cries the Babe, as he too has come up, and pulled up, and lifted his hat, and given "Good-evening." "Are you indeed engaged, Miss Wynn?"

"Yes," says May softly, the sweet blush deepening on her cheek.

"Ah!" cries the Babe in a tone of anguish, and he turns up his eyes and smites his bosom—"ah, procrastination! procrastination! Oh, the evils of delay! Delays are dangerous. I wrote it in my copybook—very often."

"What is the matter, you silly boy?" says May Wynn.

"Do you not know it? Have you not seen it? He never told his love, but let concealment like a worm in the bud prey upon his damaged physiog—I had proposed to myself to propose to you—this very day."

"Oh, had you?" says May, laughing.

"Then everything would have been changed. You would have accepted me?"

"Of course," says May, smiling.

"And I should have been the happiest of men!"

"Say *boys*," interpolates May quietly.

"But 'they have given thee to another!'" cries the Babe, quoting the words of a then popular song. "And I am broken-hearted now," and he puts his hand before his eyes.

"Cheer up, my hearty!" cries Loo Hill, entering into the fun, such as it is, of the scene.

"But perhaps it is not too late even now," says the Babe, speaking very rapidly; he has a great flow of language at his command when he chooses. "Captain Lennox, having now become acquainted with the state of my feelings, will have no hesitation, I am sure, in waiving the claim which his prior action, his indecent haste, has given him."

"None at all," says Lennox.

"But what nonsense I am talking! I do congratulate you most heartily, Miss Wynn; every one will.—Come along, Louisa!" And the two silly boys dash off again.

Under the stately portico of the Bank House, a fine, two-storied building standing by the side of the public garden, and at the immediate edge of the city proper, stands a handsome carriage with a handsome pair of horses in it. Mr. Hilton occupies the upper story of the house as his private residence. This upper story

has given the numerous dances that have taken place here during the past " cold season " a special advantage : there was a springy boarded floor to dance on. Of course people said that Mrs. Hilton had given so many dances in order to marry her newly-come-out daughters. There is no reason why parents should not try to settle their daughters as well as their sons. That motive influenced her, no doubt. But she gave so many dances for the same reason that leads us to do most things, because she liked it—liked it in every way. She loved the gay, bright scene ; she was of a gay, bright temperament ; she liked to see her friends about her ; she was very hospitable ; she was very fond of dancing ; she liked the preparing of the supper and the eating of it ; she liked to see people enjoying themselves. Mrs. Hilton knew nothing of metaphysics, nothing of the juggles of thought ; mysticism and materialism were words too long for her ; she had not reflected on the foundation of morals or what gave them their obligatory force. The Church catechism which she had learnt as a child, and the Prayer-book and the Bible, and the unwritten law of what was " nice," supplied her with her guiding principles, her rules of conduct. She loved the services of the Church, of the simple kind to which she had been accustomed in her father's church. Daily services and daily celebration would have seemed to her a making common of holy things—too much like Papistry. The morning and evening service on Sundays and an evening service on Wednesday seemed to her sufficient. She received the Communion three or four times in the year, after much solemn and heartfelt preparation. She read her chapter in the Bible and said her prayers morning and evening. If she liked to put on a pretty bonnet when she went to church of a Sunday, and if her quick eyes took note there of the bonnets of every one else, she also prayed there devoutly and fervently. If she loved merriment she also loved goodness. She was fond of pleasure, but it never came before duty. If, in the words of the old song, she " loved to see the dolphins

play," she also "minded the compass and her way." If she liked every kind of sociability, if she loved every kind of amusement—picnics by day or by night, on land or on water—dinners, balls—home was really the centre of her deepest thoughts and affections, of her interests and labours. She had proved herself an excellent daughter, wife, and mother. She liked everything that was nice—nice things, nice people, nice principles, nice ways.

Mrs. Hilton is standing on the steps of the veranda; about her is a redundant air of happiness and health. Those were the days in which life was made delightful once a week by the genius of John Leech. Mary Wade had been, and Mary Hilton was now, a living type of those peculiarly English girls and women whom John Leech so loved to draw and of whom he has left us so many charming representations—on horseback or on the seabeach, in the garden or in the drawing-room. She had a somewhat full but well-built figure, a round, rather full-cheeked, comely face, a good mouth and chin, nose a little turned up, large gray eyes, a full forehead, pretty auburn hair, as yet untouched with gray. Mr. Hilton now descends the broad staircase—which is to become so memorable—and joins his wife. Knowing that he is the manager of the Bank, you are somewhat surprised at his distinctly military air and bearing. He had been in the Company's army, but finding the promotion in his regiment very slow, he had left it in order to follow mercantile pursuits, for which he had a natural aptitude. And now the two girls are coming down the staircase, and as Mrs. Hilton watches them descending, the sight that gives her so much pleasure sends a sudden shadow across her face. Though she looks so bright and cheerful, she has had a great sorrow hanging round her heart to-day: Agnes has told her what had happened in the public garden that morning. She had of course observed that Captain Lennox had shown a great liking for her eldest daughter, and it had seemed to her that Maud had a great liking for him. How far had that liking gone? If to the extent of love, it would be a

terrible thing for Maud ; for from what Agnes had said it appeared that there could now be no doubt what Lennox's feelings with regard to May Wynn were. "He had no eyes for any one but her ; he had no thought for any one but her ; he did not praise Maud for being so brave—how he would have done so a few months ago ! He did not seem to care that she might have been bitten by the snake," Agnes had cried angrily and indignantly. "And then he must see Miss Wynn home !"

Mrs. Hilton had not been angry or indignant—Lennox had not carried his attentions so far as to make it dishonourable for him to withdraw ; May Wynn had used no unworthy arts to win him—but she had been very sorrowful. Lennox was not the man to win the fancy of every girl ; but his very repellent qualities, his hardness and strong self-will, were congenial and attractive to Maud. Of all the women she had known, Maud was the one most suitable to Lennox ; of all the men she had seen, Lennox was the one most suitable to Maud. And it was not to be so. It was very sad—very disappointing. They had seemed, in the common saying, made for one another. But what troubled Mrs. Hilton most was the question of the extent to which her daughter's feeling had been affected. Maud was so reserved and self-controlled that even her watchful, anxious mother's eye had not been able to determine this. Maud is not one to love lightly or easily, but she will love deeply and long. If she now has cause for grief it will be a deep and bitter grief. The wound will be a cankering one — it will embitter her life ; or, if that be too strong a saying—for with few or none does the deepest wound to the affections, the loss of the most beloved, of father or mother or child, of husband or wife, embitter the whole life (time cures the deepest)—it would certainly cause her a long period of sorrow and suffering. With her the anguish would be more poignant and last longer than with most. And so a cloud, not acknowledged but felt, has hung over the ladies of the house to-day. Now there comes something to brighten them up.

Just as they have all seated themselves in the carriage the postman comes up, and Mr. Hilton asks him eagerly for the letters. Looking at them quickly, he hands them all to a servant—those are bank letters—all but one. This he opens eagerly as the carriage rolls easily along.

“Hooroosh!” he cries with a flourish of the letter. “Good news—good news! I have turned up the king. That opium speculation has turned out a hit, Moll. I have made a lakh of rupees.”

“Hurrah!” cries Mrs. Hilton. “And I hope you will keep it, Tom,” she adds.

Mr. Hilton was a man of a very sanguine temperament and fond of speculations, which turned out badly as well as well.

“Yes, I will,” says Mr. Hilton. “It is a nuisance to get five or six per cent. instead of ten or twenty, but I will invest this money safely for you and the children, Moll. I promise you that.”

For the moment Mrs. Hilton has forgotten all about the griefs of the daughter whose knees her own knees touch. She has many children at home—she is one of those women who like and have large families—many boys to be sent out into the world; and now that her husband has left the service, she has no pension for herself and her children to look forward to, as have all of her lady friends here.

To Maud Hilton this great gain seems as nothing compared with her own probable great loss. Life is personal. We are all very near to ourselves. But there is something in it that addresses itself very strongly to one side of her character.

“I am so glad,” she says to her father, “of your success, not only because it brings you so much money, but because it is success. That is why it must be such a great thing to be a man. They engage in big things. They can project great schemes and have them succeed.”

“And have them fail.”

“Of course—but that makes success all the more satisfactory. Men can command armies, rule kingdoms.”

The words bring Mrs. Hilton's thoughts back to the impending catastrophe. That is a favourite conjunction of words with Captain Lennox. She has often heard him say that a man's great ambition should be to command an army, to rule a kingdom ; it evidently was his own.

"Well, I do not know that I have ever heard of a woman commanding an army, but there is one woman who governs a kingdom very well."

Under the portico of the Fanes' house stands a magnificent Calcutta-made barouche, on the panels of which are emblazoned the Fane coat-of-arms. The portly long-bearded coachman wears in front of his huge turban a silver badge with the Fane crest in the centre ; the trimly-clad grooms, who carry handsome whisks, made of the silvery hair from the tail of the yak, set in handles of silver, have the same badge in front of their turbans too. The horses are large and splendid, and the harness silver-mounted, with the Fane crest on the saddle and blinkers. And outside the portico stands a smart dogcart, between whose shafts is a very pretty little country-bred mare—great trotters they. And then from the bungalow, whose closed doors and windows are now all being thrown open, come forth as handsome a couple as you would see anywhere—the beautiful Beatrice Fane and the handsome William Hay. "Wha sae fair as Willie O ?" And he helps her into the dogcart, and they whirl away. To be seated behind a fast-trotting horse with the girl you love by your side is very delightful—and the swift motion through the fast cooling air raises their already high spirits higher.

And now Mrs. Fane comes out of the house—a stately lady fitted for stately equipages. Pride is obviously the predominant quality in Mrs. Fane's nature ; you see it in the glance of her eye, in the curl of the short upper lip, in the way the high-instepped foot is placed on the ground. Is she not married to the grandson of an earl, to a Fane ? Is it not her greatest grief that society in India is composed of middle-class people, and that their

precedence goes by official rank and not by birth? Has she not had to go in to dinner behind the wives of collectors, who were the daughters of London tradesmen? One has to come in contact with all sorts of people, and Mrs. Fane is always courteous. "D——n her condescensions!" some men have been heard to say—but in her heart of hearts she holds that there are but two classes, the aristocracy and the *canaille*. But if she is very proud, she is also a clever, kind-hearted woman, a woman of culture and breeding. If those whom her pride hurts do not like her, those whom it does not hurt like her very much. And now Major Fane comes forth in immaculate white-duck trousers and a light silk blouse, *bien ganté, bien chaussé*—quite "point-devise." And now comes forth the "fitting fairy" Lilian—"airy fairy" Lilian—the girl of "sweet sixteen," in all the bloom of her youth and beauty and innocence. And Mrs. Fane enters the carriage and seats herself in the luxurious silk-lined seat in her usual stately manner; and then Lilian, putting her hand on either side of the opening, lifts herself in, without putting her foot on the step, with a swing, to her mother's horror. The girl is so full of health and happiness that they lift her off the ground. She is ready to skip for joy. And then Major Fane gets in in his quiet, deliberate way. The different modes in which the same quality of pride displays itself in Major Fane and his wife affords a curious subject of study; but this is a simple narrative of events, which will soon press upon us, and we have not space for any elaborate analysis or lengthy setting forth of character.

The stately equipage is soon rolling over the beautifully smooth surface of the Mall; and now there is a constant lifting of the hat, a continual exchange of nods and smiles. The Mall is crowded with vehicles of every kind: barouches and landaus, the newly-introduced Victoria phaeton, palanquin-carriages (*sej gharries*, as the natives call them, *sej* being their corruption of chaise), dogcarts, and the universally used buggy, the possession of which was held needful before a young man could

marry. And you observe that the syces, or grooms, run behind the various vehicles ; we once had running-footmen in England. And the white-faced children are in their little carriages or on their little ponies, with their dark-faced ayahs and bearers by their sides. On the walk, cool and pleasant though its well-watered surface be, and though there is now no annoyance from the dust upon it, you see but few pedestrians ; but the ride on the other side is crowded with equestrians. Among these you may observe our two young friends, Tommy Walton and Loo Hill.

" Here they come," says the latter, glancing over his shoulder towards the advancing carriage of the Fanes.

" Now, young fellow, just you take the old woman's side. If you play me the trick you did last evening and take the other, I will punch your head for you when we get home," cries Tommy excitedly.

And no sooner has the carriage passed than the two lads, having made their salutations, set their well-groomed ponies in motion, catch up the carriage, and proceed to ride one on either side of it ; Hill, obedient to the behest of his friend, taking the right, that on which Mrs. Fane sits, while Tommy takes the other. The pretty Lilian blushes as she observes the disposition ; there is a pretty admixture of amusement and tenderness on her face. And while Hill nobly engages the attention of mother and father, Walton, riding with his hand on the side of the carriage, bends his head and enters into low and eager talk with Lilian. Their eyes meet and make great play. And then she turns hers coyly away, and only treats him to fitful glances. And to watch those sudden coquettish glances, and her pretty little playful, sometimes scornful, smiles, and to observe the deep solemnity, meant for manly gravity, that had settled down on young Walton's face, would have made an old man laugh—or cry. The young fellow has evidently got the love-fever badly. It is said that this disease, like the whooping-cough, is worst when taken in old age ; but it can be very violent in youth too, as the lapse of very many

years, of many years of official toil, has not yet caused one to forget. Master Tommy is "head-over-heels"—no, he would have considered the employment of that expression in connection with his case derogatory—madly, passionately, desperately, or, as he would have said himself, most seriously in love. For he means this love to progress to matrimony. The fewness of his years, and the fewness of the rupees that constitute his monthly income, seem to him no bar. He has collected authentic instances of fellows who had married when only ensigns. And did not "the Funds" make ample provision for one's widow and children?

But this is "band evening," and now they have reached the little open plain where the band plays, and on to which the stream of carriages and equestrians is passing, and Master Tommy has to abandon that sweet propinquity, that delightful proximity.

Everybody is at the band. Old Brigadier Moss and Mrs. Moss in their big barouche, and stout old Colonel Barnes, with his jolly-looking mahogany-coloured face, in his easy buggy, and Major Coote in his sporting cart, and Colonel Grey on horseback, and Doctor Campbell, the civil surgeon, and his wife, in their landau, and Mr. Wynn in his little Victoria phaeton. And here comes Mr. Melvil with his four-in-hand. How beautifully he manages the splendid, well-matched team! He is a splendid whip; and on the coach-box with him is the pretty little widow, Mrs. Papillon: Mr. Melvil is a bit of a gay Lothario. And here comes the Rajah Gunput Rao in his handsome carriage, with a couple of troopers riding behind him. He is the only native who takes his pleasure on the Mall or at the band in the same way as the English people do. Leaving aside the bandsmen, and the ayahs, and bearers, and grooms, he is the only native here. The natives of the town are passing the evening hours in their own manner elsewhere. The usual routine is in progress here: the horsemen move from carriage to carriage; people descend from their carriages and walk about, and meet together and talk.

Every one knows every one else. There is an air of easy, friendly sociability. Of course envy, hatred, and malice are not wanting in this society of Christian people. But the inequalities of rank and fortune, which are such fruitful causes of them in England, do not operate to the same extent here. Here all are members of the same society ; here all are on the same common plane of " the Services." Here the income of every one is known to a rupee, his exact social status fixed. They are almost all members of the same English middle-class, which out here, to its huge delight, is elevated into the highest one. They are most of them school or college mates. They have almost all passed through the civil and military colleges of the East India Company, which has given them a common social training, given them a common social starting-point, given them common memories. There is a good deal of relationship among them. They have had the same experiences ; they have all common friendships and acquaintanceships. There is a great community of thoughts and feelings and interests. Their complete separation from the people of the land draws them the more closely together.

And now there is a great commotion, as Lennox and May Wynn come riding up together. The news of their engagement has been noised abroad. Here is confirmation of it. A little crowd has soon gathered round them, congratulating them.

The Hiltons' carriage is drawn up on the opposite side of the stand, so that they have not seen the newly-engaged couple arrive.

" I wonder what the commotion is about ? " says Mrs. Hilton.

" What is the cause of this sudden commotion ? " she asks of Colonel Grey, as that pleasant-looking officer pulls up by the side of their carriage. " Not an accident, I hope ? "

" Oh no. An occasion for rejoicing, and not for mourning. Your services are likely to be required again," he says, looking toward the sisters seated together on the back seat.

"Our services?" says Agnes.

"Yes."

"As how?" asks Agnes.

But Maud knew; her heart had told her.

"As bridesmaids, to be sure."

"As bridesmaids!"

"Colonel Grey means that Captain Lennox and May Wynn are also engaged to be married," says Maud quietly.

Her mother and sister both turn their eyes upon her, though they would they could not. They both marvel at the wonderful self-command that keeps her face so free from emotion, so unperturbed, her voice at its ordinary modulation. And truly this display of self-control was as great as if she had allowed the glowing, quivering end of a red-hot bar of steel to be applied to her flesh without wincing, without moving a muscle or uttering a cry.

"That is it," says Colonel Grey; "I suppose you knew it was coming?"

"Yes," says Maud quietly.

"They have just ridden up together, and every one is rushing up to congratulate them. I have just done so," says Colonel Grey.

CHAPTER X.

IN THE PALACE.

WE have said that no natives of the better class are to be seen on the Mall or at the band ; that they are amusing themselves otherwise elsewhere. The chief of these evening amusements at this season of the year is the flying of paper kites "kite-fighting." The kite-strings are coated over with a smooth paste, into which very fine pounded glass is introduced, and as the kites fly in the air the string of one kite is made to fall across the string of another, and both are then let go, so that the strings run off the big wooden reels on which they are kept wound, just as a fishing-line runs off its reel when the fish is darting away, until one string or the other gets cut, and the kite belonging to it floats away. The contest is watched by eager crowds, not only because of the interest that is aroused by any contest, such as that between the Oxford and Cambridge boats, because of the interest in one or the other of the kite-flyers, as in the Oxford or Cambridge crew, but because the crowd has a direct personal share in the amusement. By the law of the game the "cut" kite is lost to the owner (that element of loss is essential in every amusement), and becomes the property of any one who can catch it, and so the crowd enjoys the fun of a race, of a run for a prize. The kites when cut high up in the air float away to long distances ; the runners have to exercise their judgment as to where they are likely to fall.

At this season of the year you will of an evening see

hundreds of kites, of every shape and size and colour, floating over a native town. They are flown from the flat housetops. The amusement is followed by grown-up men, by men of rank and station. The kite-flyer takes as deep an interest in the shape and size of his kite as our sporting men in the shape of greyhound or horse. There is often great rivalry between the champion kite-flyers of a town.

The bright evening glow rests strongly against the lofty inner or cityward walls of the great palace-fortress, for these directly face the west. In one of the bastions of the battlement stands a group of people, or rather stand two groups. This group consists of attendants, one of whom carries a handsome hooqah; another a peacock's tail set in a silver handle; another an earthenware water-bottle, and a cup made of silver beaten very thin, so as not to heat the cooled water when poured into it; another a large palm-leaf fan; while another bears a gilded chair, and another a gilded footstool. The other group consists of the Nuwâb of Khizrabad, the master of this noble palace-fortress, the descendant of a long line of princes, and two of his favourite courtiers. The most plainly dressed man of the three is the Nuwâb. This royal house had once possessed world-famous jewels, and many of them still remained to it; had been preserved from the despoiling hands of the Afghan and the Mahratta, withheld from the pawnbroker and the money-lender; so that the royal person still blazes with gems when the Nuwâb seats himself on the famous "Peacock Throne," and holds a durbar, and the representative of the English power comes to pay his respects to him. But the only ornament the Nuwâb wears at this present moment is the simple amulet bound round his left arm a little above the elbow. It is only a little bag of green silk, with two silk strings attached to it, and within the bag is only a little square piece of jade. And yet more care has been devoted to the preservation of this heirloom than to the preservation of that other heirloom, the great diamond known as "the Mound of Light."

For upon the piece of jade are certain cabalistic characters which were engraved upon it by that prince of magicians, King Solomon himself. As long as this mystic gem is in the possession of the royal house of Khizrabad, it is safe from utter destruction; it will remain royal still; however tempest-tossed, the bark cannot be lost.

The Nuwâb wears a plain muslin long coat and a pair of silk pyjamas, so full in the legs as to give him the appearance of having on a petticoat; on his head is a little gold-embroidered muslin skullcap, and on his feet a pair of green gold-embroidered slippers. He is a stout, middle-sized man, with a broad, good-humoured, foolish-feeble face. The light of a full strong manhood will never again shine in his lack-lustre eyes or illumine his now wan-hued countenance. He has abused and wasted it. He is but a poor phantom man, as he is but a poor phantom king. When the English, superior in their struggles with the Mahrattas, had become masters of Northern India, of this part of the great peninsula, they had thought it better to leave the King of Khizrabad on his throne, and work through his name and ancient authority. They left him all his titles and dignities, and assigned him a princely income. Within the walls of his own castle he still retained all the power of a monarch, the power of life and death; but those powers, being abused, had gradually been taken away. Tired of paying enormous debts, the English rulers had taken the management of the income, and of the lands from which it was derived, into their own hands; and as the magic of the royal name began to fade away with themselves, as the need for its use disappeared, they began to treat it with less respect and reverence. It is difficult to keep up a sham. These things did not trouble the present occupant of the throne. That the representative of one of their most famous lines of princes, who by virtue of his office was not only their temporal but their spiritual head, should be a mere mock monarch, a mere puppet king, a prisoner in the hands of the infidel, a pensioner of their bounty, was most galling to his co-religionists. But his palace

and his zenana, money enough for his personal wants, the respect and homage of a prince, these were all the Nuwâb himself wanted. He was very well satisfied to have these secured to him by the English, in whose power he had a very confident trust.

He did not fail to remember, if others did, how greatly his grandfather had suffered when a prisoner in the rough hands of the Mahrattas—how he had been subjected to personal indignity and violence, had been straitened for his daily bread, until the English had delivered him; and how it was solely owing to those English that his royal house had continued to maintain an existence of any kind whatsoever. No, no; he was very well satisfied. A princely income, the pomp and show of royalty without its cares, the possession of his palace, royal retinues and royal surroundings—these were enough for him. He did not care for power. He did not mind being only a monarch in name, a monarch without a kingdom, without a people. His position had its worries and discomforts; but what had been the position of his immediate predecessors? He shuddered to think of it. There were members of his household who considered the present condition of things most irksome and intolerable—most degrading, most humiliating. That was all very well. But *he* enjoyed the present comfort; *he* would have to run the risks, the terrible risks, that any attempt to alter that condition of things would involve; *he* would have to bear the burden of active royalty.

The Nuwâb is standing at the edge of the bastion, and gazing out intently over the lofty parapet wall. Beneath him lies the grand city founded by his ancestors. There are the encircling battlements which gave it and them their power and importance. There is the lofty and massive mosque, with its beautiful, slender, soaring minarets. Behind him are the exquisite public halls and private chambers of the magnificent and once impregnable palace-fortress they had reared for themselves, and in which they had lived so long and with such splendour. There is the majestic gateway, from the top of

which floats forth their ensign and his own. And there, right before him, stands forth clear against the evening sky the Flagstaff Tower on the ridge, from which floats forth the English flag, the ensign of "the Company." There are the thatched roofs of the cantonment, the encampment of the foreign power that holds him and his kingdom in thrall. Is this strange conjunction raising sad or fierce thoughts in his mind? Not a bit of it. Is he thinking of the change—of the glorious past and the inglorious present? Not in the very least. He is gazing out over the lofty battlement in order to watch the movements of two kites, with whose evolutions his mind is entirely occupied. The art of the game lies in making your kite outsoar the other, and then dive down so that your line may run over the other, with the advantage of the descending weight. The Nuwâb Sahib is watching the manœuvring of two very large kites with breathless interest. And now the two strings have crossed, and they are allowed to run off the reels, and the lately taut-held kites now float loosely away. They keep floating away, until from the crowd of men and boys below arises a great shout, the held breath is let loose, and a cry of "*l'o kata*" ("It is cut"), and one of the kites becomes upright once more, and soars upward in all the triumph of success; while the other goes warping away on its side, in all the abandonment of defeat. It has been cut high up in the air; it seems probable that it will fall within the palace walls. "It is coming this way! it is coming this way!" cries the Nuwâb in a tone of great excitement, and he moves to the end of the bastion, and shuffles along the top of the battlement as fast as his enfeebled frame and loose trousers and loose slippers will let him. The trailing string of the derelict kite passes over the battlement, close in front of the Nuwâb. He puts out his hand and seizes it. He hauls the kite down with as great a sense of joy and triumph as ever soldier or sailor felt when he hauled down an enemy's flag. "I caught it myself! I caught it myself!" he cries, in tones of intense delight and triumph, to the courtiers and attend-

ants who have followed him. They load him with applause and felicitations and congratulations.

Here were the very dregs of that energy, and activity, and fierce acquisitiveness which had founded this royal house.

But there was one of a much stronger and fiercer character than the Nuwâb in the castle. On the very verge of the eastern battlement that went sheer down to the waters of the Jumna stood one of the most beautiful chambers in the palace. It was octagonal in shape, and three of its sides stand out from the line of buildings of which it forms a part, and round these sides runs a balcony which actually overhangs the giddy height. Those three projecting sides are of pure white marble, and profusely adorned with inlaid work, and the balcony without is a most exquisite specimen of that feature of architecture of which we find such noble specimens in the East. It rests on massive sandstone brackets, of noble design and workmanship; its roof is formed of marble slabs, which project a good way beyond the marble columns on which they rest; these delicate marble columns, with their handsome bases and capitals, are most beautifully proportioned, and each of their four square sides is also profusely adorned with inlaid work, and the marble slabs which run from column to column and form the parapet are exquisitely pierced, each one of a separate design, each one a work of art. The aerial grace of the apartment befits its aerial situation. The chamber is very lovely within likewise. The floor, the walls, the beautifully curved roof are all of pure white marble. The walls are adorned with fruit and flowers and foliage, here showing in their natural hues in inlaid work, there standing out still more beautifully in relief from the pure white surface of the wall. This chamber forms part of the suite of apartments set aside for the use of Fatima Begum, the "Adornment of the Palace," the "Delight of the Universe," more commonly known as the Sikunder Begum, the youngest and favourite wife of the Nuwâb of Khizrabad. But with the exception

of the bath-chamber, which with its tessellated marble floor, its exquisitely carved marble baths and cisterns, and its honeycomb roof, incrustated with minute mirrors, forms one of the wonders of the palace, this is the only apartment applied to her own personal use. This is the chamber in which she wholly lives. It forms her bedroom, dressing-room, boudoir, dining-room, drawing-room. In the centre of it stands a large square bedstead, over whose web or mattress of broad tape interlaced there is just now flung only a lovely flowered-silk coverlet, but on which lie many silk-covered pillows and cushions. On one side of this stands a massive wooden chest or coffer, and with the exception of a lacquered and gilt chair and a couple of coarse wicker-work stools, there is no other article of what we call furniture in the room. But a great number of the Begum's personal belongings are bestowed in the niches, with flamboyant tops and artistically carved sides, which adorn the walls of the chamber. In these are placed her little round mirror, and her wooden tooth-comb inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and her box of antimony, and the little leaden pencil with which she applies it to her eyelids; in these stand her elegantly shaped and beautifully chased long-necked gold scent-bottles. And there in silken covers rest some beautifully written, and beautifully illuminated, and beautifully bound copies of the works of Jâmi, and Hafiz, and Sheikh Sâdi of Shiraz—for the Begum can read; and the heap of cream-coloured, gold-spangled paper, and the pretty Cashmere-made sliding pen-and-ink case lying on the bed show that she can write likewise.

She is not occupied either in reading or writing just now, however, as she reclines in luxurious ease; she is dallying with the beautifully-chased gold mouthpiece attached to the end of the long velvet-covered tube or "snake," which comes up from the tall, handsome hooqah which stands on a piece of stamped velvet placed on the floor by the side of the bed. Her dress consists of a pair of loose silk trousers, a little silk bodice, of which the two projecting conical portions are adorned with

gold embroidery, and of a long soft muslin veil or sheet, of a gossamer-like fineness, and of a rare and beautiful brown tint, which flows about her like a mist. Just now it has been allowed to drop down upon her shoulders, leaving her head and neck bare.

She is a very beautiful woman. The outline of her face is a pure oval. The forehead has a fine full outward sweep; the eyes are like those of a gazelle, large, and liquid, and jet-black; the nose a delicate aquiline; along the line of the lips, neither thin nor full, runs the double curve of Cupid's bow, and within them runs a row of very good teeth, though both lips and teeth are at this present moment disfigured, to English eyes, by the red juice of the *pān* she has just been eating. On the bed lies a very pretty little silver casket, with curved pierced top; this is the *pān-dān*, or box in which the *pān* leaves, and the quicklime, and the cut betel-nut, and the cloves that are put into them before they are wrapped up into their usual triangular shape, ready for the mouth, are kept. The small, shapely head is well placed on a slender, swan-like neck. She has a beautiful figure, too; as she lies upon the bed the character of her dress permits its whole flowing outline to be seen very clearly. Her hands and her feet, which are of course bare, are wonderfully small and very perfect in shape. The Begum, though a slender, is not a little woman, yet her hands and feet are as small as those of a young English girl; that, however, is a feature in which Eastern women surpass our own. The palms of her hands and the soles of her feet, her finger-nails and her toe-nails, are dyed red with henna. This custom has arisen in the East to hide the otherwise too pallid, sometimes ghastly hue which the nails and palms and soles present, to stimulate the brighter and more healthy colour of colder climes. As an Eastern writer would say, the Begum is "adorned at every point." She has rings on her fingers and rings on her toes; there is a silver band round each big toe; she has a bangle of solid gold round each ankle, as well as round each wrist; she has two sets of earrings in her ears, each ear being bored

in the upper cartilage, as well as the lower lobe. Her nose-ring is not the enormous circlet which looks so preposterous and ugly, but a little gold ornament set coquettishly on one nostril. Round her neck is a handsome ornament, composed of little square gold tablets, studded with gems, and joined together by little short gold chains. Her skin is of a very light olive tint. Her cheeks present that warm and bright, yet soft and downy, look which goes only with such a complexion.

But this woman, so fair without, is most foul within. Messalina did not surpass her in greed or cruelty. If she resembled the Empress Theodora, as depicted in the pages of Gibbon, closely in face and figure, so did she in dissoluteness, in the prodigality and promiscuousness of her favours. She was cruel, cunning, lascivious, vindictive, avaricious. Though many a year had elapsed since life had ceased to have any mysteries for her, though she had a son who was nearly fourteen years old, the Begum was still a very young woman, still under the age of thirty.

She is not alone in the apartment. Not far from one of the windows opening on to the balcony stands a slave-girl of "Thirty-eight"—that is to say, of the terrible famine year 1838, in which parents not only, as in her case, sold their infants, but even killed and cooked and ate them. The girl is busy cleaning out a cage, which is placed on a high wooden stand. The gold-wired cage contains a gem-like bird—a rare and beautiful bird of some distant foreign clime. The slave-girl's eyes look very dull and heavy; then as she looks out of the window there comes into them a sudden wild look; and then as she looks round the room a sullen one. Of late years slavery has found some eminent advocates in England. But they had no personal knowledge of the matter, or they would have known that it is an accursed thing. The command of the person of one human being by another evokes the brute on the one side, produces the animal on the other. The person of this poor bond-girl had been subjected even in her tender childhood to cruel tortures. Then Hiria puts back her arms, and gives a

great yawn—a very wide yawn—a very prolonged yawn—a too prolonged yawn ; for she has left the door of the cage open, and the other captive, pining for freedom, having no love for captivity even within golden bars, and with immunity from the trouble of seeking for its food, seeing an opportunity of escape, has seized it ; the beautiful bird has darted out of the cage, out through the open window near, and is winging its joyous flight across the broad expanse of the Jumna, its bright wings flashing in the evening light. The slave-girl's arms drop down, but her mouth continues open as her eyes follow the rapidly-disappearing bird. Then from the open mouth comes forth an inarticulate cry, a curious sort of cry, like that of an animal.

"*Henh !* What is the meaning of this ?" says the Begum (the bird-cage is behind her). "What do you mean by making a noise like that—like a sick cow—and disturbing me ?"

"The bird !" gasps the girl.

"What about it ?" says the Begum indifferently, not looking round. She is reflecting on matters which engage her attention very deeply just now ; she is enjoying her scented tobacco.

"Has flown away !"

"What !" cries the Begum. She has raised herself up, and dropped the beautifully-chased gold mouthpiece, and leaped on to the floor in a second, swift and noiseless as a panther.

"Where has it gone to ?" asks the Begum in a loud, harsh voice.

"Across the river," pants the girl.

"Then it is lost," says the Begum in a low, soft voice, which sounds more appallingly in the slave-girl's ear than the former harsh one. The girl has shrunk back against the wall. There is on her face a dull, stupid, bewildered, frightened look.

"You have allowed my bird to escape, my beautiful bird, the like to which there was none other in India. You did it on purpose. I know you did."

The girl makes no answer. She has her hands up, as if to defend herself against a sudden onslaught. She continues to look at her mistress in a dazed kind of way. The thousands of blows she received on her head from shoes and slippers—those of men as well as women—were enough to make her addle-pated.

With the change of voice has come a change of look on the Begum's face. The flaming look of anger has departed, but in its place has come the look of cruel, quiet, satisfied delight you may see on the face of a cat when she watches the captured mouse make little runs before her. The girl has afforded her just and reasonable cause for punishment.

The inner door of the apartment opens, and some one else now enters the room. *Who* is this? *What* is this? You have seen the slave-girl, and you now behold the other as indispensable adjunct of the Oriental zenana—the eunuch.

"What is the matter? What has happened?" exclaims the newcomer in his thin, shrill, squeaky voice.

"She has allowed the bird to fly away. It has flown away over the Jumna. There is no chance whatever of getting it back—none. There might have been had it been morning. But now it is evening; it will soon be night——"

"What?—the bird! flown away!" cries the eunuch in his squeaky voice, looking towards the empty cage.

"That is a great loss. How did it happen?"

"She allowed it to escape—on purpose—to hurt my feelings—to anger me," says the Begum, looking at the girl. She knew that the girl was about as likely to anger her voluntarily as a rabbit a ferret, a mouse a cat, a kid a panther.

The girl shakes her head.

"You did! you know you did!" exclaims the Begum furiously. "You witch! you female dog! you daughter of Satan!"

"Shall I give her the slipper?" asks the eunuch.

"The slipper!" says the Begum—"the bowstring!"

I must have her life. She shall be hung. The Nuwâb Sahib shall sign an order to that effect."

"He no longer has the power to do so."

"Yes; these cursed Feringhees have taken that away from him, as they have taken away everything else. May their faces be blackened! May they burn in hell for ever! But the time is now near at hand when we shall get back that power and every other. But you can strangle her here. As I said before, the bowstring! Go and get one."

"But how about the body?"

"You could throw it down into the river."

"It might be found. There would be inquiries. You know that this new Ruzeedunt [Resident], this Milmil [Melvil] Sahib, is very troublesome."

"I know he is—the pig, the infidel, the son of Satan, the brother of an unchaste sister!" to which she adds many a filthy epithet, for she has a full command of the foul vocabulary of abuse of her native land, and the mere mention of Mr. Melvil's name always causes her to draw largely on its copious resources. There had been a deadly feud between the two ever since Mr. Melvil had entered on his present post, two years before. His supervision of the doings in the palace, of its finances, had been very minute and strict. But above and beyond everything else, he had shown no desire to aid her—rather a desire to thwart her—in what had been the great aim and object of her life, the recognition by the British Government of the choice which she had prevailed on the Nuwâb to make of her son as heir to the throne, in place of an elder son by a senior wife.

"If this floor were not of stone," says the Begum, "I should have a hole dug in it and bury her alive. I should then put my bedstead over the spot, and they might then search for her if they pleased. But go and get the bath ready. Make it boiling hot."

"You must not lose your temper," says Jhundoo Khan, the eunuch. He has his feminine name as well—Golab (the Rose). "If anything happens to her, if

she disappears, there is sure to be a row, an inquiry." He seems to be very much afraid of the said inquiries.

"Of course there would be an inquiry. If we sneeze there is an inquiry. But we should simply say that it was an accident; that she went into the bath of her own accord."

"We must be very careful as to what we do at this present time," says Golab. "We must not draw the attention of the English on ourselves these days." This Jhundoo Khan was very ambitious. We know that men of his class have risen to high office in the East—to be at the head of armies, of kings' households, of the State. He already holds a high place in the Nuwâb's favour, as is shown by his being placed in charge of the apartments of the Nuwâb's youngest, most beautiful, and most beloved wife—a trust which he systematically betrays, the Begum having won him over, not only to wink at her amours, but to be an accomplice and agent in them. Should the movement against the English succeed, and Khizrabad become an independent State once more, he looks forward to holding the highest office in it, to being Chief Treasurer, or Prime Minister, or Mayor of the Palace, or Commander-in-Chief of its forces. He is very anxious that there should be no collision between the English authorities and the palace just now.

"And the Soubahdar Rustum Khan is waiting below. Let me shoe-beat her, and be done with it."

"No; I will give her the slipper myself. I will make her head bald for her. You hold her hands."

The eunuch takes the slave-girl by the hands. She makes no resistance. She is overjoyed to have escaped the boiling water. The Begum comes behind the girl, and plucks the long sheet off her. This leaves the whole of the body above the top of the trousers bare, with the exception of where the little linen bodice covers and encloses the breasts, and where the strings by which it is tied run across the back. In an earthen pan on the floor are some of the little charcoal balls which are used

for lighting hooqahs with. The Begum stoops down and drops the slipper she has taken into her hand silently on the floor, seizes the tongs, and taking up one of the red-hot glowing balls, applies it violently to the girl's bare back. The burnt flesh hisses, and the slave-girl gives a leap and yell. The Begum applies the burning ball again, this time choosing the more tender flank, and with another shriek of agony the girl drops down on the floor.

"Put her out," says the Begum, and the eunuch drags away the wretched, writhing, shrieking girl, and thrusts her out of the lovely chamber.

"Give me a drink of water, Golab," says the Begum, "and then call Rustum Khan."

CHAPTER XI.

THE BEGUM AND HER LOVER.

WHEN Golab has left the apartment the Begum places herself on the bed in a recumbent attitude. She draws the edge of her sheet—which is quite plain, but of great value from its exquisitely delicate texture: it is a piece of muslin of the kind known as *shub-num* (the “evening dew”)—over her head, but she does not draw it so far forward as to conceal, but only to shade her face, and then she disposes it carefully about her person.

The Soubahdar Rustum Khan now enters the room. He is differently dressed from what he was in the day-time. He has donned his dandy attire. His linen long-coat is a perfect marvel of the lavatory art, so minutely crimped are the sleeves from shoulder to wrist, so snowy white is it. His trousers are so tight at the ankle, where there is some more of the minute crimping or pleating, that it seems a marvel how he got them over his not very small feet. These are, of course, bare; he has left his shoes at the door of the chamber. His loosely-tied turban hangs down very much over one ear: it has been wound round a highly-embroidered muslin skull-cap. His large whiskers have been carefully trimmed, his long love-locks well oiled. He looks the ruffling blade, and he enters with the carriage of one. But in his salutation of the Begum there is a respectful deference as well as an easy familiarity. And he takes a quick glance at her face as he seats himself by the side of the bed. What is her mood to-day—that of the Begum or the lover?

Six months ago, when he first came to occupy his present position of paramour, Rustum Khan had not cared very much for the Begum's moods. His connection with her was a mere love-affair : it would end when he left with his regiment at the close of the year, sooner if the Begum saw a more likely man. But now his position had come to possess a political aspect. There were signs that there was near at hand—he had joined with those who were striving to bring it about—one of those great political convulsions in which rank and fortune rearrange themselves. He was one of the bold, reckless men whom the Company's service did not satisfy. It was all very well when he was rising from grade to grade, exchanging the musket for the sword, increasing his income from fourteen shillings to five pounds a month. But neither rank nor pay will improve any more, and his views have expanded with his rise. What ! after so many years of service, after so many arduous campaigns, after so many severe fights, to find himself still in a subordinate position, with nothing to look forward to but his pension ! A vacant life lay before him. He was stifled by his own success. And he did not care for the hollow, powerless rank, that of native officer, to which he had attained. Others might think it a sufficient reward for their services to have the English officers shake hands with them and offer them a chair. He thought a great deal too much store was laid on those haughtily rendered civilities and condescensions. They were disagreeable to himself. There was too much of patronage and condescension in them. He thought there was a hollowness in them too—a mockery. It had been all very well, he thinks over and over again to himself, while he was raising himself from grade to grade, but there is no further enhancement of rank or pay left for him now. And his views, his opinion of himself and his powers, expand with his rise. What ! after all those years of service, after all those arduous campaigns and bloody battlefields, to find himself, though called a commissioned officer, lower in rank than those two English

boys (Walton and Hill) who had just joined the regiment—beardless youths with maiden swords!

He had nothing more to gain by drawing his sword for the Company. What inducements were held out to him to draw his sword against it? The immediate command of his own regiment. That was a position worth the having. Why, if he held it only for ten months he would make as much money out of it as his present pay would amount to in ten years. Then the Ranee had promised him the supreme command of the Nuwâb's army when there was one again. He knew that he was not likely to hold his position as the Begum's favourite for ever or for long. But when he had come to have close political as well as love relations with the Begum, when he had seen to what the possession of her favour might possibly lead, he had made it his business—under his gay recklessness was a crafty thoughtfulness—to study her character carefully, and he had come to understand that, should he once obtain that promised high command, his retaining it would depend entirely on his fitness to hold it; the Begum did not allow her passions to interfere with her interests. But he must take care to retain the Begum's favour until he had obtained it. And he knew that, though the Begum seems as ready to forget her rank in her attachments as was the Empress Catherine of Russia, she is really most jealous of its prerogatives. So he watches her mood and temper. Will she be lover or queen?

The former first, at this moment, he thinks; so he seizes the little pink-nailed, pink-palmed hand which is hanging over the side of the couch, and carries it to his mouth.

"Sweeter to the lips than honey!" he exclaims rapturously. And then, gently putting it down again, he fixes his large, black, bold eyes on her face and exclaims, "And the sight of thy face is as collyrium to the eyes; and the sound of thy voice like music to the ear; and thy person hath a sweet savour to the nose. But, ah! the bitter-sweet of love! Ah! the pain, the bliss of

loving ! The lover has everything to delight him, and yet he suffers. His heart burns, his liver freezes. The bulbul flies to the rose, but his breast is pierced with its thorns.

“ Ah ! those sugary lips of thine !
 In colour like the pomegranate blossom,
 In shape like the bow of Cupid ;
 Lids of a casket of pearls,
 Thy eyes like pools of jet.”

“ And, ah ! ” (continuing the perusal of her face with his big bold eyes, the Begum sustaining the scrutiny with a pleased fixed look) “ the fortunate mole upon thy cheek ! ” And then he quotes from the well-known song of Hafiz, than which none other has ever been so much quoted or sung, and which, like its own opening line, seems “ ever fresh and ever new,”—

“ For her black mole I'd gladly give
 Bokhara fair and Samarcand.”

He has a fine strong, mellow voice. The fine long flowing line comes out from his mouth with a grand smooth wave-like roll.

All this is very pleasant, but business has to be attended to also. And it is business from which the Begum would not let any amorous talk, fond as she is of it, withdraw her.

The Sikunder Begum had entered the Nuwâb's zenana as his third wife at the age of twelve. The next ten years of her life were passed in fulfilling the early-begun duties of a mother ; in acquiring the accomplishments the Nuwâb delighted to have her taught. Then she began to take an interest in things outside her own apartments, in the family affairs ; and her clearness of intellect and force of will and her influence over the Nuwâb soon gained her a paramount position in the palace. Then she began to chafe against the English control. As has been said already, though the Nuwâb might sometimes find that control annoying, it was to him really a comfort and a relief ; the more he was deprived of his authority (the young Begum's misuse of it was greatly

the cause of its curtailment) and relieved of the management of his own affairs, the more happy he felt; but not so the Begum—to her it was a maddening restraint. The Nuwâb might like a gocar, but it was no place for her. She preferred a chariot. From the moment she had felt the strength of her pinions, the Begum had longed to spread them, to put them to fullest use; she longed to use beak and claw. It was these English who prevented her, who held the jess. She raged furiously against them. This young woman exhibited in her character that combination of dissoluteness and devoutness which appears so strange and yet has been so common. She was very loose in her morals, atrocious in conduct, and yet she was most religious—a fanatic, a bigot, a zealot. She was a furious Mussulmanee, which is the feminine of Mussulman. She therefore hated the English on good religious grounds. The measure of her wrath had been filled to overflowing by the refusal of the ruling power to recognize the Nuwâb's choice of her son as the successor to the throne of Khizrabad—still a throne. She had now every reason to hate the accursed, interfering, domineering foreign race—as a wife; as a mother; as a true believer; in the name of God.

And on Mr. Melvil—as one who had made those restrictions more stringent and severe, who had cast the weight of his much-trusted opinion against her son's succession, who was the representative of the tyrants and infidels—her hatred had settled and concentrated itself.

But raging against the English had seemed for many years like raging against the adverse forces of nature—against the malign influences of the air, against storm and tempest, against plague and pestilence. Who could control their coming or going? Only the hand of Fate. But those who could penetrate into the mysterious workings of Destiny had prophesied that the English power was to last for the space of a hundred years only, and that period was now over; this year, this present year, was the last of the hundred.

And were there not signs that the hand of Fate had

begun to work against the accursed foreigner? The good or ill, the gain or loss, of nations as of individuals, seems to depend on a combination of circumstances. How suddenly had these appeared against the English! An overstretched empire; discontent in the army on which their power depended; discontent among the people; discontent among the nobles; fear and trembling, and the hatred begotten of them, in the hearts of kings and princes; Hindus and Mohammedans drawn together by a common fear for their religion and caste; the animosity of the one aroused by the overthrow of the great Mohammedan kingdom of Oudh, of the other by the overthrow of the great Hindu principalities of Sattara and Nagpore; general perplexity and trouble. The Begum had done her best to foment the feeling of discontent, to cause the streams of antagonism to join together and rise in one overwhelming flood. She had thrown herself heart and soul into the great conspiracy, and had brought to bear on it the whole force of her intellect, the full strength of her will. But the power of the English was great. The sword is the weapon of Fate, and they held it. Then came this affair of the greased cartridges. Herein, above all, was shown the adverse working of the dread mysterious power. The English were turning the point of the great weapon they held in their hands against their own breast. The fated, foreboded hour was come. The opportunity was given. It was for their foes to seize it. To fan the rising flame of mutiny, make it general, that must be their object. Her keen intellect saw it, her bold spirit leaped to do it. Let the whole army rise. Then would planning and plotting be turned into bold action. She longed for that.

"Golab said you had something to communicate," says the Begum.

"Mehndi Ali Khan was here to-day."

"Was—and he did not come to see me!"

"He had to hurry on to Abdoolapore. The sentence of the court-martial on the men of the 3rd Cavalry is to be promulgated and carried into effect to-morrow."

"But he will let me know what it is."

"At once—by special messenger."

Rustum Khan then proceeds to communicate to the Begum all that Mehndi Ali had communicated to him.

"He is sure of the regiment at Fatehgarh?"

"Yes."

"That is important, because of the fort there. We must seize all the great fortresses; we must get possession of all the Government treasuries. We shall then be supplied with a great store of powder and shot, and guns and money—the sinews of war. We shall have command of a large army. We shall have the means of paying it, and so securing its fidelity. We shall have all the great strongholds in our hands. The whole country will be ours. It only needs that the whole of the army should be with us. Each single regiment should be carefully attended to. We must win over the soubahdars and the jemadars, the native officers like yourself. The army of the King of Oudh will come together again. The Mahrattas will put their armies in the field once more. The great Sikh army will reassemble. What will the English be able to do against such forces as these? And all these armies must be directed against them; not against one another, as heretofore. We must make one common cause, at all events until the English are got rid of. Let there be bold and sudden action, a simultaneous rising everywhere. This will bewilder and daunt the English, and bring the people on our side. Bold action; but there must also be careful preparation beforehand. *Futteh ba bundobust*" (arrangements ensure victory).

The Begum belonged to the class of bold, strong spirits who are not frightened or overpowered by great enterprises; who look at them with a calm, cool eye as affairs to be accomplished by the proper adjustment of means to ends.

"And the English must be wholly got rid of. They must be slain everywhere—man, woman, and child. They have asserted dominion in a *dar al huk* (land of the true faith). 'And kill them wherever ye find them, and

turn them out of that whereof they have dispossessed you.' So it is written in the blessed Koran."

"We will do so," said Rustum Khan, fondling his big fat calf, "God willing."

"He will help. Hath he not said it? Is there not this line in the Koran, the exalted: 'God is your Lord, and He is the best helper'? "

They continue to discuss the general aspect of affairs for a little while longer. That heap of papers on the bed contains reports of the state of feeling in every regiment of the Bengal Army; communications from kings and princes who have lost their thrones or are trembling for them; from great landowners who have lost all their power and influence; from very big men who have become very small ones; from treacherous employés of the Government; from Rohilkhund, Bundelkhund, Oudh, Bengal, the Punjâb, from Cabul and from Persia—nay, the Begum's correspondence extends even so far as Constantinople. She refers to a document which exhibits the distribution and strength of the English (as distinguished from the native) troops throughout Northern India.

"See how few there are! One regiment here, one regiment there. They could be dealt with separately. They would not have time to join together. How simple the whole matter is! "

The Begum loves business, and has a great capacity for it. The secret preparations of a conspiracy and the sudden outburst—the stealthy stalk of the tiger and then the bold spring—exactly suit her turn of character, very cunning and very bold.

Then they turn to the consideration of local affairs.

"You are sure of your own regiment? "

"*Khoob*" (well, thoroughly).

"And the 76th? "

"That is favourable too. Most of the sepoyes are Brahmins. The general service order is very irksome to them. You know they refused to go to Burma three years ago."

"But I do not trust that infidel, Matadeen Panday, the Soubahdar Major. He is quite capable of betraying us to the English."

"Quite, if he thought he would gain anything by it. But he would not. He knows the English officers would not listen to him; would not believe him; would probably punish him for defaming his comrades. Ha! ha! They do not wish to hear anything against the sepoy. They do not want to be troubled."

"But what will make us sure of his co-operation when the time for action comes?"

"Rupees," says Rustum Khan laconically.

"I could promise him titles and an estate."

"He would prefer cash down."

"True; the title and estate might not be given," says the Begum with a laugh. "But we have not much command of money just now. This pig of a Milmil (Melvil) Sahib keeps us very *tung* (tight), and the kafirs of Hindu bankers refuse us credit since he has given it out that the Government will no longer be responsible for our debts."

"You have your jewels."

Rustum Khan knew some of the Begum's secrets. He knew that the strong-box or coffer beyond the bed contained a great store of most valuable jewels and gems. The Begum had accumulated these not inereely for the adornment of her person, though that was an object too. She had devoted herself to gathering them together in order to gratify her greed and love of power more than her vanity. She valued them as concentrated wealth; as secret wealth; as portable wealth. They gave her money at her own command; enabled her to carry out her own purposes; provided against a possible day of disaster. She had worked on the Nuwâb's inability to refuse, as well as on his affection for her. She had made purchases of specially valuable gems herself, and left the Nuwâb and his English custodian to arrange for their payment. Mr. Melvil's determined opposition to this process was another great cause of her bitter hatred towards him.

"I must see what value the kafir sets on his services," says the Begum. By the kafir she meant Matadeen Panday.

The evening glare has disappeared ; the bright twilight is passing away ; the stars are beginning to come out.

"But where is the bird ?" exclaims Rustum Khan, who has risen and strolled towards the window.

"Flown away. That black-visaged, that —— slave-girl Hiria allowed it to escape—my beautiful bird, the like to which there was none other in Hindustan."

The dash takes the place of a term of abuse common enough in India, but too gross, too shameless, to find translation here.

"You have punished her for it ?"

"I tickled her back a little," says the Begum indifferently.

"You must get another bird."

"If that strayer from the paths of righteousness, that son of Satan, that oppressor, that skinflint of a Milmil (Melvil) Sahib will sanction the expenditure for it. Why, the other day he would not allow my son to purchase a pair of greyhounds ; he said their cost was too high. A prince not able to buy a dog ! The oppressor keeps a very minute account with us. I am keeping a very minute account with him. There may be a settlement of it soon. O Rustum Khan, would that the day of our power were come !"

"It may be very near at hand," he says. And then they have done with politics for that time, and exchange its dry discourse for the soft language of Love.

Rustum Khan has to be back in his lines before the gun on the ridge has sent forth its last, its evening roar. But he must have a swagger down Star Street first. That far-famed thoroughfare is now at its gayest and brightest. The oil-lamps twinkle in all its shops. The bright moonlight floods it. It is filled with a vast concourse of people all moving joyously about in the coolness after the monotonous languor of the day.

CHAPTER XII.

UNDER THE MOONLIGHT.

As the sound of the evening gun dies away through the now once more cool fresh atmosphere, there is a continuous clatter of hoofs, and roll of wheels, and flashing of lamps along the Mall, for the whole station is flocking to Melvil Hall to-night.

Mr. Melvil was very hospitable, and he was fond of social display, and he liked to please the ladies. During the cold season he gave many balls and picnics—dinners all the year round. The thermometer, of course, marks no degree of temperature at which girls will not dance—they would dance in the fiery furnace; but there are older people, and so in the months between May and October dances were very rare in Khizrabad. It was with as much surprise as delight that the girls had seen the word “Dancing” on Mr. Melvil’s cards of invitation for this evening.

There has been a big dinner; the men have not yet risen from table, for little, old Brigadier Moss and big, stout, jolly-faced Colonel Barnes like to linger over their cigar. But the ladies have retired, and the drawing-room is crowded, for most of the post-dinner guests have arrived, the married people from their homes and the unmarried men from their messes; the young fellows with their pink-and-white English faces, and the old boys with their brown-and-yellow Indian ones. There are men enough to prevent that after-dinner period from being as dull for the ladies as it usually is. But still

there is a dullness about. All the unmarried girls and most of the married women—who like India because they get so much dancing there—are depressed by the thought that there may be no dancing after all. This spacious apartment is the one generally used for dances, and there are no signs of preparation. True, Mr. Melvil's army of servants could remove even this vast array of furniture in a very short time. But the room is filled with costly articles, rare vases and objects of art, which Mr. Melvil could never desire to be moved in a hurry; and, above all, the floor has not been prepared, the carpet is still down. That seems decisive. Here are all the spinsters of the station gathered together, under this one long punkah—Beatrice and Lilian Fane, and Maud and Agnes Hilton, and May Wynn and Miss Lyster.

"I am afraid there is to be no dancing after all," says Lilian Fane in a most doleful voice.

"The word 'Dancing' may have been left on the cards by mistake," remarks another. There are general expressions of sorrow, even from the heavy-hearted Maud Hilton, who had looked forward to the dance as a welcome distraction. To those not knowing, the lamentation of Miss Lyster, the withered old maid, might have seemed affected; but it was not so. (Miss Lyster, it will be remembered, is she who for years has had charge of an invalid mother, a mysterious mother whom no one has ever seen.) Though her face has not upon it the brightness that rests on those of her much younger companions—though it is not, like theirs, illumined by hope, but darkened by disappointment, darkened by the shadow of a life un-lived, natural powers not put to use, the gifts of nature wasted—yet it still retains its beauty of feature, its fine expression. Sadness and sorrow, and the burden of her home-life, and the ill-health that comes of an unnatural mode of existence as an unmarried life is, had robbed her figure of its fullness, but not of its elegance, had not diminished its graceful carriage. She was a beautiful dancer, and she never had any lack of partners; and she was very fond of a dance; it brought some

brightness into her life. We all like to have a little pleasure. Besides, in a ballroom her old-maidenship was forgotten, and not the youngest or fairest girl could out-rival her there.

Great is the regret among the young men too. Tommy Walton, the "Babe," is almost frantic. He has been looking forward to the dance, not only for its own sake, but as a grand opportunity for carrying out a most important purpose of his own.

The disappointment extends to the married ladies too: there is hardly one among them there who does not dance. Mrs. Hilton, most certainly, is not the one: she has not given up dancing because her daughters have come out; she does not give in to that doctrine.

But now the men come trooping in from the dining-room; and when Mr. Melvil, after having saluted the guests whom he has not seen before, says, "We will have our coffee out of doors," and leads the way into the splendid veranda which runs along the back of the house, they perceive that he has intended that the delight of surprise should be added to all the other delights of the entertainment he has prepared for them. Suddenly a bright illumination spreads over the grounds before them, and soon they present a fairy-like spectacle: the bright lights twinkle along the winding walks and upon the terraces, and are reflected in the waters of the lake. The veranda opens on to that rare and much prized adornment of a bungalow in those latitudes, a broad smooth lawn, only kept green by constant diligent watering. Surrounding the lawn were majestic trees, and as these were hung with various-coloured Chinese lanterns—green and blue, and red and yellow—it seemed as if one had suddenly brought before one the gardens into which Aladdin made his way by means of his wonderful lamp, where the trees were hung, not with oranges or apples or pears, but with gigantic gems, rubies and emeralds and amethysts. A splendid tamarind-tree stood a little way within the edge of the lawn, and this presented a gorgeous spectacle, every single branch being closely

hung with lanterns—there is nothing more beautiful than the play of the red of fire on the stems and amid the foliage of trees—and under this carpets had been spread, and easy-chairs and little tables laid out. What a delightful out-of-door drawing-room! And at one side of the lawn stands a long refreshment-table with its crowd of dark-faced attendants in their robes of snowy whiteness. Here fruits and dainty cakes, and ices, and tea and coffee, and claret-cup, and champagne-cup, and what many preferred to either, the wholesome and refreshing brandy-and-soda, were to be had in superfluous abundance all the night long. And there in a circle stands the famous band of the 3rd Grenadiers ready to discourse sweet music. How delightful to pass the evening out in the open air, with its ever-increasing coolness and sweetness, rather than in a heated room with its ever-augmenting heat! How delightful to recline in these easy seats listening to the music!—think the older people. How delightful to wander about the grounds listening to the music!—think the younger. Tommy Walton nearly shouts with joy. He can now carry out his project.

Had Mr. Melvil done no more than this for the entertainment of his guests he would have done enough. But he has done more. The large dancing-cloth usually used in the drawing-room had been spread in the middle of the lawn—the grass of which was much shorter than that of an English lawn—and tightly stretched and securely pegged down. There is to be dancing after all.

And now the sounds of a pretty waltz are sounding through the soft still air, and eager couples are hastening to the cloth—which in the midst of the big lawn looks so much smaller than it really is—and have put it to trial, and pronounced the arrangement perfect. Round and round the joyous couples go. They abandon themselves to the music, to its rise and fall, in all-forgetting dreamy joyfulness. Now they descend the smooth liquid slope and now are upborne by the softly rising wave. Life has become cadenced, rhythmical. They are wafted

along on the wings of music. It is a trance-like ecstasy. They have passed away from the earth into dreamland—fairylane.

It is delightful to wander along the illuminated garden-paths and listen to the music, made sweeter by the distance; delightful to do so by oneself, or in the company of a friend, preferably one of the opposite sex. These joys are open to the few of the older ladies who do not dance, to the many men who do not do so either, or who cannot find partners: for, as was usual then in India, the men are greatly in excess. And for those whom such amusements pleased not others were provided. Card-tables had been set out in the long illuminated veranda. In one of the lower rooms, built up from the bottom of the declivity on the edge of which one end of the house rested, as already noted, was a billiard-table, which was now lighted up. There was amusement for all. And, as Major Coote—the great *shikaree* (or hunter), the slayer of ibex and ovis-ammon on the lofty summits of the Himalayas, and of tiger and buffaloes in the low swamps of Bengal, who is just now commanding the 76th—observed, “Merely to escape the heat and after-dinner tedium of the drawing-room” (he was not a ladies’ man) “and to sit out in the open air, smoking one of Melvil’s excellent havannahs” (he did not care for the music), “was in itself a most unexpected and delightful pleasure.”

And so the moments pass by in quiet or vivid enjoyment.

Captain Lennox does not dance. “You might as well ask a hippopotamus to hop,” he says. May Wynn cannot altogether avoid dancing, even had she so wished or Lennox permitted: for where there were so many men who could not get partners every lady who could dance at all—and May danced very well—was expected to dance; but she thinks it quite allowable to give him, Philip, the dances he would have had had he been a dancing-man, and to put them down on her card consecutively, so that she may have a good long time out

with him. And now the moment has arrived, and they wander away together. May Wynn's heart is filled with a trembling sensation of delight as they withdraw farther and farther from the gay, bright, crowded lawn: for now Philip Lennox and she are to be alone, really alone together for the first time since they had become engaged, not yet twelve hours before. He draws her arm through his and they move on, for the first time so close together, in a thrilling rapture of delight. They move down the splendid avenue of mimosas, which, thickly hung with lanterns, presents one of the most beautiful spectacles of the night; but still they do not hesitate to leave it and enter a more dimly-lighted side-path. This they pursue until it brings them to the very end of the grounds, where the run of the brick wall surrounding them has been broken by the introduction of an octagonal turret crowned by a light cupola resting on slender sandstone columns. It was built as a *gazebo*, for there is a fine view of the valley of the Jumna from here: in the daytime, looking northward, you follow the winding stream for many a mile; and then, turning to the east, you look across it and have command of a wide sweep of the grove-covered village-crowded plain of the Doâb; and then, looking south, you follow the many-channelled valley downward to below the city walls, and then dimly away into the distance. But you must come here on a day in the rains, when there is such a wealth of vegetation, when the cultivated crops and the wild reeds and grasses spread around in rich lush growth, when the glowing sunshine floods the laughing earth, when the river rolls by in majestic if turbid flood, in one single wide stream; or you must come on a day in the cold weather, when the earth, if not robed as gorgeously and splendidly as then, is still very beautifully and more tenderly clad, when the sunlight is more tempered and distance lends its magic to the scene, when the river winds its way through the valley in many silver streams: but you should not come on a day like the one just past, when the earth is utterly bare, disrobed, when the brown fields spread a horrid

fallow, when the grass is withered and yellow, and the pools dry, and the reeds and rushes dead, and the trees dust-laden, and the earth trembles with the heat, and everything seen looks hard and dry in the desiccated atmosphere, and the fierce excessive sunshine obliterates all distance, and the shrunk stream meanders through a wide waste of glimmering, glittering sand. At this evening hour, however, the wide shallow valley of the river is not made harshly visible by the bright incandescent sunshine, but tenderly veiled by the as yet pale silvery light of the but lately risen moon.

As they take their stand beneath the cupola there falls on their ears the trembling mellow vibration of the great gong which hangs above the main gateway of the palace-fortress in the city, above the Gate Magnificent. This great gong proclaims the passing hours to-day as it has done for many a century back. Its vibrations link the present with the past. A continuous chain of sound runs through the history of Khizrabad. This huge gong had been placed above the gateway when the gateway was first built. It had formed part of the first furnishing of the palace-fortress. It had rung out the hours that first day it was swung and every day since: in the darkness of the night and the brightness of the day; during the still calm days and in the days of storm; in the days of Khizrabad's pride and prosperity and in the days of her humiliation and sorrow. Its sound had formed an integral part of the existence, awakened one of the sensations that constituted the lives, of the people of Khizrabad from the first. Lennox remembers this, and it gives him something to speak about—affords him relief from the stress of his own feelings. The last mellow vibration of the great disc of metal sonorous has died away on their listening ears.

“It is strange to think of that gong having measured out the lives of so many generations of men. It was put up when the city was founded. It formed part of the original furnishing of the palace. It has measured out the history of the Nuwâbs of Khizrabad, the whole

length of the lives of every one of them except the first one, the man who had it cast."

"It measured out my childhood too," says May softly; "I was born here, and did not go to England until I was eight years old. The sound of this gong, and the firing of the gun on the ridge, and the voice of the muezzin calling from the top of the minarets, are the earliest sounds that I can remember."

"I shall listen to it with the deeper interest now," says Lennox.

Though strictly true, what foolish, feeble words!—with what a shallow, artificial ring!—a sort of speech that any partner of May's, coming here with her after a dance, would have felt himself bound to make. They are not his own words—not in accord with the strong emotion working within him. But how shall he clothe that emotion in words? Thus thinks Lennox. And then he hurries on,—

"The curious thing is that the gong has been rung during all these years by men of the same family in strict succession of father and son."

"Without any break?" says May.

"Yes." And then,—

"What a fine sound the gong has!"

"Yes."

But that forced talk cannot be maintained any longer.

"My God, how I love you!" says Lennox.

Now it is himself that speaks. She trembles.

They were standing close together against the parapet-wall, looking out over towards the river, their faces to the fast-brightening moonlight.

"Do you really love me, May?" he asks in a low deep whisper.

She looks up at him. The moonlight falls upon her face, upon her soft gray eyes: they convey her answer. His arm is put around her waist; he draws her to him, holds her tight; their lips meet in one long, close, unhurried kiss.

Friends ! let us look for the joys of heaven, but they are sometimes anticipated on this earth.

They gaze away into the distance, but they see not the silver-filled air. They are blind with emotion. They are deaf. They hear not the sound of the music on the lawn where the dancers are dancing in tune. They are breathless. They are in a swoon of joy.

"It is very wonderful ! I can hardly believe it. Do you really love me ?" he asks after a while, when his senses have come back to him.

"Yes," she whispers softly.

"You do not know what this means to me," he says. "There comes over me a feeling of infinite satisfaction and rest. My warfare with myself is ended. What that warfare may mean to a man no woman can tell. A loveless life is a sad, a cruel life. I have known many able men whose career has been marred for want of love ; not finding that, everything else seemed valueless ; ambition lost its charm ; they cared not for success ; they ceased to work or strive. Happy the man who marries early ! His whole life is then before him to enjoy, to make glorious. Otherwise it will creep along on broken wing. He will move along the road of life weak and staggering like a starving man. Let that deep hunger of the soul be satisfied, and he will move along it with strong, joyous footsteps. Then will he have full command of his powers, and be able to put them to fullest use. Man and woman are the two wings on which life rises to its fullest height."

Lennox was not a man of words. This speech, both for its length and style, might have seemed strange to many of his friends. It may seem strange for a man in his present position. But his official work had taught him to formulate his thoughts, to put them into sentences. These were the thoughts of years which had clothed themselves in a set form of words. He now said aloud what he had often said to himself. He was speaking of what he had himself felt.

"I may be generalizing from my own case," he goes

on, and his continuing to speak shows how much the subject has dwelt in his thoughts. "But that is how I have thought and felt myself. I have been very fortunate. I have got exactly what I wanted. I have had the rule of a large district, the independent rule. I have had autocratic power—or taken it," he adds with a little laugh. "I have been a little king. You know on what a pinnacle one is set in such a position with reference to the people about one. I have raised and drilled an army of my own, and led it and taught it to fight. These are the things I had desired and dreamed of from my youth upwards. I have had an income far beyond my wants. And yet I tell you that in the midst of all this I have often envied one of my own servants. When I have seen him in possession of his own little home and with his wife and children about him, I have thought him more fortunate than myself—his life more full and complete and satisfactory. How I have hungered for love! you must give me plenty of it."

"All," she whispers.

And then she asks him how he came to love her, when, and why. And then comes the pretty lovers' talk, and the moon is sailing across the heavens and the river speeding by.

But they cannot remain here all night. As they hasten back they meet or pass many a couple wandering along the cool, fragrant pathways. And in one enchanted spot, where there is a dense growth of plantains, with their huge leaves, so beautiful in shape and colour, and where the pupita upholds on its slender stem its beautiful coronal of leaves, and where there is many another tree of graceful stem and beautiful foliage, they came face to face with Beatrice Fane and William Hay. And if an Oriental writer would have said that verily here was paradise (*peri-des*, the land of the peris, a celestial dwelling-place), he would also have added that truly here were two of its celestial occupants—even Orientals hold the white skin the more beautiful: whiteness is celestial, blackness infernal. William Hay is a "fair" man in

every sense of the term ; his good looks rise to the height of beauty. And as Beatrice Fane stands there with the now vivid moonlight falling full on her golden hair, on her snowy-skinned beautiful face, on her downward-flowing snowy robes, her stately, beautiful figure, verily she does look like a celestial being, like " a daughter of the gods." And the two men, bound together by ties of relationship, bound together by the still closer ties, the hooks of steel, of true friendship, exchange one of those soulful looks which are so rare, at all events among Englishmen. His cousin and friend's engagement has filled William Hay with delight, for he too knew what was wanting in Lennox's lofty but somewhat harsh life. That engagement has done what Hay thought could not be done—added to his own present felicity.

" How supremely happy he looks, and how much gentler ! " says Hay, as he and Beatrice Fane move on along their way. " Do you remark how the very tone of his voice has become gay and light, less harsh ? "

" She looks very happy too," says Beatrice.

" It makes one very happy," says Hay, and then they go off into that delightful foolishness of lovers which can no more bear recording than love-letters can bear being read out in a court of law. And Lennox and May Wynn smile at one another as, going the other way and brushing by a leafy bower, their ears are greeted from its hidden depths by a sudden " Hush ! hush ! " in a childish silvery treble they knew very well.

For into the innermost recesses of that bower had young Walton conducted the pretty Lilian Fane, after having danced three successive delightful dances with her. " There was no reason why they should not do so," Mr. Walton had protested ; " this is not a regular ball."

The seat placed in the arbour was a judiciously small one. It held only two, and those two must sit very close together—in immediate contiguity. The light of the Chinese lantern played picturesquely on the broad leaves of the giant creeper with which the bower was

overgrown. He is looking hard at her; she is looking coyly down.

"Don't sit on the top of me, please!" she exclaims without looking up, as he makes a movement on the seat, and still further diminishes the very small interval of space between them.

"The bench is so small!" he exclaims, still keeping his gaze upon her.

"Then why not stand up?"

But the suggestion is not acted upon—neither to her surprise nor her distress. But she must still continue to tease him with it.

"It would be better for my dress."

"I am not hurting your dress," he says, putting back the delicate fabric a little with reverential fingers. He moves his legs away a little too, and this brings his head and shoulders still nearer to hers. In order to preserve his balance—physical; all other is lost—he has to place his right arm along the back of the seat close behind the pearly, uncovered shoulders. There is a brief space of silence. Then, swayed by the inherited impulse of ages, she, as if unconscious that the arm was there, though knowing very well that it was there, leans back against it for a moment of ineffable bliss to the owner; and then she lifts herself up again and assumes an upright attitude of rigid propriety.

"You are tired of sitting here," she says.

"You know I am not," he says angrily. His angry tone causes a little smile to play about her rosy mouth.

The alabaster shoulders, the white, swan-like neck, the sweet cheek on which still lingers the rosy tint of her native land, and the beautiful curves that run between it and the neck (that most beautiful, though rarely noticed, feature of a beautiful face), how distractingly near they all are to his eyes, to his lips! How very near to his lips! At any other time he would have yielded to the almost irresistible temptation and pleaded infancy, but just now he is more desirous of

putting forward his manhood than his boyhood. And so he withdraws from the temptation, removes his arm from its dangerous position, and sits up.

Lilian's pretty little hands are lying in her lap. An artist in words might have made something out of the contrast between the white patch of moonlight and the white of the dress, and of the gloves, and of the white arms above. But Mr. Walton's eyes are rather attracted by a little bit of pink colour on one of the upturned hands.

"You have torn one of your gloves," he says.

"Yes; this one has burst," she replies as she lifts up the hand and holds it before his face.

The "Babe" puts his gloved left hand under the upheld hand to support it, and then with the forefinger of his ungloved right hand he tenderly touches the soft little pink protuberance. That completes the current: he feels a sudden electrical shock. Lilian too experiences a curious tingle and thrill.

"It has broken here," says poor Tommy, in a helpless kind of way.

Those shocks are very paralyzing.

"I see that," says Lilian demurely.

He keeps the tip of his forefinger on the now uncovered portion of the ball of her thumb.

"Quite a big tear," he says.

Then the fingers of his left hand, hitherto held out straight, experience a sudden closing movement, as the leaf of the sensitive plant curls up when you touch it.

"Please let go my hand."

"Will you give it to me?"

"Give you one of my hands!"

"You know very well what I mean. Will you marry me—be my wife—Mrs. Walton?"

On the round, good-humoured face of the Babe is a look of solemnity, of portentous seriousness, that would have made you laugh.

"Marry you! Why, you are only a boy."

"A boy! I am over nineteen."

"That is not very old."

"Three years older than you are."

"It is different with a woman."

"And I do not want to marry just yet. We should have to wait a little to make arrangements—about the furniture and all that, you know," says the Babe.

"But you are supposing——" And she tries to withdraw her hand, but he imprisons it between both his own.

"And I shall work hard and pass in the languages," he goes on eagerly. "You think I am always laughing and joking; but I can be serious too, and I have considered the matter most seriously. My people have a good deal of interest, and will be able to get me on to the Staff, or into the Commissariat Department, or into the Public Works Department, or the Political Department, or the Punjâb Commission. May I speak to Major Fane to-morrow?"

"People would laugh at us—would laugh at a boy like you being engaged to be married."

"Let them! May I speak to your father to-morrow?"

"But you are supposing—— I—do—not—know—that—I—myself——"

"You said the other day that you liked me very much."

"So I do—in that way."

"And I love you so, Miss Fane—Lilian!"

"Hush! hush!" she cries as there is the sound of a footstep—of a strong, firm, regular footstep: it is that of Philip Lennox—on the little secluded pathway that runs by the side of the bower. It dies away.

"I love you so——" He takes up the tale again.

More footsteps.

"Feefteen per cent., mon! Mair like feefty! The rod to wealth is open to ye, mon!"

The voice is that of Dr. Brodie, Lilian's ancient wooer, the old man who had made her the same proposal the young lad is making her now. He is standing at the

very door. Lilian gives a start; she can hardly restrain a little cry, a laugh. It would be too absurd for her sixty-year-old lover and her nineteen-year-old lover to come face to face at such a moment as this. The circumstances of the first proposal, so very different from this, flash up before her. That Dr. Brodie should tumble in upon them now! But he has moved away. And then Lilian jumps up and makes for the door, and has reached it ere the Babe can stop her; but he detains her there. The pathway is now empty.

"You have not yet said 'yes.'"

"I shall be late for the dance; the music has commenced."

"It does not take long to say 'yes.'"

"Or to say 'no.'"

"You would not say that."

"Perhaps"—and then, seeing the look on his face, "perhaps not. But I cannot say either now."

The sound of footsteps—the rustle of dresses—voices and laughter. The errant couples are hastening quickly back. Lilian too begins to move along the pathway.

"You will let me know to-morrow, then," he whispers eagerly as he walks by her side. Other couples are coming up behind them.

"Not to-morrow; I must have that to think over it. You are so young. People will laugh," she continues, when the quick-walking couples have gone by.

"Let them," he repeats. "We shall be so happy together, Lilian! Then the day after?"

"No, not the day after. That will be Sunday," she says, when they have got by the breaking-up and reforming couples. They themselves are now moving quickly on. The young fellow has not time to argue.

"Then on Monday," he says—"Monday for certain."

"Very well—yes."

"And you will say 'yes.' You would not have the heart to say 'no.'"

"We will see." They are now at the very edge of the lawn. She gives him an arch, mischievous look.

but there is tenderness in it too, and he plucks up heart of hope.

The moon is now in the zenith, and is pouring her silver light straight down on the lawn. The enjoyment is there at its height. The increasing coolness enables the joyous couples to throw themselves even more vigorously into the delights of this novel dancing on the green. The soft music floats about. There is a fragrance of tobacco in the air. The cool cups are quaffed. While the dancers are footing it on the cloth, the whist-players are intent on their tricks and their honours in the veranda. Friendly groups are conversing.

One such group is composed of the three officers commanding the three regiments—of Colonel Barnes, Colonel Grey, and Major Coote; of Mr. and Mrs. Hilton, and their host, Mr. Melvil. They have been talking about the troubled spirit in the native army, due to the issue of the greased cartridges, about the seditious placard which had appeared on the walls of the mosque. Mr. Hilton, now a non-official, finds himself, as it were, between the hammer and the anvil. Mr. Melvil resists him violently if he hints a civil commotion; the others come down on him heavily when he expresses a dread of a military mutiny. He takes a pessimist view of the aspect of affairs, they an optimist. If he had been an ordinary commercial man—a pekin—they would have extinguished him with a snub. (That estrangement between the non-official and official classes in India is very unfortunate. The former have a far more close and free and familiar intercourse with the natives, and consequently a more correct and extensive knowledge of their thoughts and feelings. They watch the money market, that most sensitive barometer.) But Mr. Hilton has been one of themselves, and they listen to him, even though they do not agree with him, and his sayings please them not.

“We shall know the result of the court-martial on those men of the 3rd Cavalry to-morrow,” says Mr.

Hilton. "I hope they have been severely dealt with. The trial has now lasted more than a month. They should have been tried by a drumhead court-martial and shot the very same day."

"I do not agree with you," says Mr. Melvil. "I am glad that the Government has avoided any such harsh measures. They are not a sign of strength, but of weakness—of fear. It is better for it to repose calmly on its strength, and let the conduct of the men be dealt with in the ordinary way."

"It would be hardly fair to shoot and hang the sepoy's because the culpable carelessness of the Government in allowing those cartridges to be issued has disturbed, and naturally disturbed, their minds," says Colonel Grey.

"It is all the fault of those d—d—I beg your pardon, Mrs. Hilton—fools at headquarters," said Colonel Barnes, with a very hearty emphasis on the oath.

"Mutiny should be stamped out," goes on Mr. Hilton, "or the disaffection may spread to the whole army."

"It cannot do that," says Colonel Grey quietly. "There is none of it in my regiment, at all events."

"Nor in mine," says Colonel Barnes, his being the regiment to which the Soubahdar Rustum Khan belonged.

"Well, I do not know to which regiment each sepoy belongs," says Mr. Hilton, "but I have noticed a marked change in their look and bearing: it is much more insolent towards Europeans. And I have noticed the same among the people of the city. A clerk of mine told me that he heard a very coarse song about us Englishmen being sung in the streets the other day. Then there was that placard that was put up on the walls of the mosque."

"The work of some crazy fanatic," says Mr. Melvil.

"And then the sending of those *chupatees*" (cakes) "from village to village. They may have been passed on as a sort of fiery cross."

"Fiery cross!" says Mr. Melvil disdainfully. "Fiery cross!" says he laughingly. "More of the nature of hot-cross buns, I should say"—and he laughs again, as do the three commanding officers.

"There is something in the air," persists Mr. Hilton. "Rupee paper is down."

"My husband thinks so much about these things because of the Bank being in the city. He is afraid of the loss of the books and the money in case of any popular disturbance," says Mrs. Hilton.

"The Bank is as safe here as if it were in London," says Mr. Melvil—"probably safer."

"Well, I hope there will not be any disturbance," goes on Mrs. Hilton, laughing; "for now that my husband has sold all his old guns in order to get these new breechloading ones, we have no weapons in the house, unless you call his hog-spear one."

"It would be quite sufficient to put down any popular disturbance that is likely to take place here," says Mr. Melvil sarcastically—"even in your hands, Mrs. Hilton," he adds laughingly. "Even if Hilton were away, and you had to defend the Bank yourself, to use the spear yourself like another Queen Boadicea—or who was it?"

"I most sincerely hope I may never be called upon to do so. I might hit a man with my parasol, but I do not think I could poke one with a spear," rejoins Mrs. Hilton, laughing; and then some one else comes up, and the conversation is changed.

The day and the night are divided by the natives (of India, always understood) into three watches of four hours each; and the hours that separate, begin and end, them—twelve, four, and eight—have an especial name, and are always struck twice over. Twelve slow strokes of the great historic gong, and then twelve more in rattling succession, have long ago proclaimed that the first of our eight days is over and the second one begun. Then came the solemn single stroke, and still the merriment went on. Then two struck, and then

three, and still the merriment continued. But at the stroke of three there is a call for the carriages. Tommy Walton gives Lilian Fane's hand a tender squeeze as he helps her into hers, and thinks that there is a slight, but still quite appreciable, return pressure; so he departs homeward in an ecstasy of delight.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DOCTOR.

THE events of the Indian Mutiny would furnish forth a hundred narratives. The events of the outbreak at Khizrabad would furnish forth many. In this particular one we have elected to follow the fortunes of the five girls whom we saw gathered together in the public gardens yesterday morning. But, as will be seen at the end, the movements of Colonel Grey of the 3rd Grenadiers were to have an intimate bearing on the fate of some of those girls, and so we shall have to follow them succinctly also. And those movements are to be determined and directed by the fact that Colonel Grey's wife and children being just now in England, he is at present living with his cousin, Mrs. Campbell, who is the wife of Dr. Campbell, the Civil Surgeon of Khizrabad.

This post is an important and desirable one. It enables a man to do much good by bringing the resources of Western science to bear on the relief of the sufferings (often very great from easily remediable causes) of the people about him. It is well paid. It has not the drawback (a public as well as private one) which attaches to most public offices in India—that of constant change and movement. It allows a man to remain a long time in one place, to carry on a continuous work, to have local sympathies. The tree grows best in one spot: its roots strike deepest then: its sap has kindest flow; its leafage is most luxuriant. The life of a wanderer

remains incomplete, for its surroundings of things and people can never enter fully into it, become part and parcel of it ; such complete incorporation comes only of constant contact. Dr. Campbell has been Civil Surgeon of Khizrabad for more than twenty years. His great professional skill, his great kindness of heart, and his eccentricities have made the name of "Jock" Campbell—of "Jan Cummul Sahib"—very widely known. The insanitary conditions of the towns and villages, the inimical conditions of the earth and air, insufficient clothing, poor food, want of knowledge of the art of living, cause diseases, both of an ordinary and of a loathsome and swift-killing type, to be very prevalent in India. John Campbell had plenty of scope for the exercise of his professional skill—which was very great—in the ancient, unsewered city of Khizrabad. I see him now in my mind's eye, his hands deep in his trousers pockets—a man with a large, strong, bony Highland frame ; a wide, full, placid forehead ; thoughtful, meditative eyes. The large, grave brow, the speculative eyes—those are the two features of the face that memory recalls at once without an effort : its marvellous plate needs stimulating ere there is developed on it still further the long, wide-nostrilled nose, the large, loose-lipped mouth, the broad, square, well-cut chin.

"Let observation with extensive view," says Dr. Johnson, "survey mankind from China to Peru," and it will find how few men there are to whom the things they long for, work for, and obtain afford the complete satisfaction they had looked for and expected. Dryden says more tersely, "Look round the habitable globe, how few know their own good, or knowing it pursue." It was very agreeable, therefore, to find a man who had got everything he wanted or cared for, and was thoroughly satisfied therewith ; and such a man was "Jock" Campbell. He would not have changed places with the noble Duke the head of his clan. Had he not his own large, cool, comfortable house, his own grounds, which his botanical skill and the loving care of twenty years

had made so beautiful? Had he not horses and carriages and servants? Had he not an excellent library? Was he not a physician and a surgeon both, while the poor Duke of Argyll was neither? Did not his Government income, ample and secure, relieve him from all pecuniary considerations in connection with his work? That was a great element in his happiness. The labourer was worthy of his hire; but it was very delightful to him to be relieved from all money-getting cares, to be able to exercise his art free from all thought of gain. Had he not his hospital, in which he reigned supreme, the arrangements of which he had brought to such a pitch of perfection, in which he performed his miracles of healing, caused the blind to see and the lame to walk, and raised up many from the dead? There was a Divine beneficence in those gifts, bestowed without money and without price. And then, had he not the crowning blessing of an absolutely suitable wife?

Jean Wardlaw, whom he married, had good features, a good head, and a good heart. In her house was economy without meanness, liberality without profusion, careful supervision without annoying interference, order and method without irksome rigidity. You could not have found a happier home than that of the Campbells anywhere. The fact was known from Calcutta to Peshawur, for during the many years the Campbells had lived at Khizrabad most of the regiments of the Bengal army had come to be stationed there in their turn, and there was not one of them in which there was not some fellow who, suffering from the first change of climate—from homesickness—down with some bad illness—had not owed his restoration to health and cheerfulness to a residence in their large, comfortable house—to Mrs. Campbell's kindly care. To know the Campbells was to like them. They were both very hospitable. They were always putting people up. Their house was ever open to their own friends and to their friends' friends. And so for this fortunate couple the years went by in felicitous flow. Too often the world seems to one a

pesthouse, a cockpit, a madhouse. Such happiness was good to see.

At first the happiness of the tender-hearted couple had not been quite complete from the want of children. But fortune was determined to be kind to John Campbell (who well deserved all its favours), by whom that want was chiefly felt. A little girl was given to make their bright and sweet home life brighter and sweeter still. The joy of the mother during those first delightful, if anxious, years of babyhood and childhood can be easily imagined. Not so that of the father: it was unusual, extraordinary. The baby was strong and healthy, and gave very little trouble, and so was pronounced "good;" but on the rare occasions when there was need for it, how tenderly and unweariedly would the big man pace up and down the room—of course that infant slept in the same room with its parents—with the little restless one in his arms! From the earliest they were great friends. A great portion of the child's earliest years was passed in her father's own sacred apartment. It was there that she spent those hours during which it was deemed advisable that she should lie on the hard, flat floor—for the good of her little backbone. How tenderly would the big man gaze down on the little thing whose only business was to gaze up! It was there that the piece of infinity began to crawl. It was there that it began to balance itself on its little legs. It was there that it first performed the marvellous feat of tottering from the chair it was holding on to its father's knees—"quite by itself." K.C.B.'s and K.C.M.G.'s—all the honours in the world could not have given John Campbell as much delight as the witnessing of that sight did. Then came the marvellous period of the first movements of thought, of the first spoken word. It was a period of intense delight to John Campbell. No company in the world could have been more delightful to him than that of his little girl. And when she could do her half-mile she and her father went out for a walk together every morning, down the shady lane

at the back of the house, and by the stonecutter's shed, and along the rope-walk, and by the blue door which the child ever spied out with ever-renewed delight, and by the bit of scrub where the goats were feeding—every morning for a long time along the same quiet, shady, dust-free lane, so that the child should enjoy the pleasure of familiarity, the rapture of recognition. The big man was the little child's constant playfellow. Here in his own room was he put to bed on the sofa and watched over by his little mother. But it was in the huge drawing-room that the scene that rises up before me took place. The mother is seated at the piano, while the Brobdingnagian father and the Lilliputian child are having a dance together. The big man shuffles about, or gives a ponderous skip—heavy of leg though light of heart—while the little child flies hither and thither like a leaf blown about by the wind, and the puppy-dog "Tim" gambols about them. And now she must play and they must dance; and how the father and mother laugh as they "set" to one another and dance to the nameless tune, while the little dog laughs to see such sport and performs a dance of his own! The sweet childhood, with its dear, delightful blunders, its perfect imperfect speech (how much more expressive is "com-fable" than comfortable!)—so happy, so complete, so diamond-bright—has passed away. The rarely beautiful golden-brown hair has begun to descend below the widening shoulders. (What a marvellous thing is that daily growth! Why do we wander into the realms of imagination for wonders when the material world supplies them so fully? why into the dim regions of space for marvels when they are all about us?) The soft, sweet, early dawn is passing away; but it is still the time of childhood, innocent and bright and gay—still the time of fullest love and dependence, of expanding thought and opening character. To little Helen her home is still the whole world, her parents her dearest friends and companions. Being by herself, this is especially the case with her. There is no large nursery in

which the little folks come to form a society of their own. Most of the hours of the Indian day have to be passed by an English child indoors. The little girl can meet her child friends only in the morning or the evening. And so here the eternal trinity of father and mother and child was still complete—a unity.

But everything costs. The Campbells have now to pay for their happy time in India. It is a heavy price. The child must be sent to England. It is a dreadful prospect—bad enough for the father, worse for the wife and mother. For him there is the anodyne of his work, the consolation of the inevitable. He must remain in India. But must she remain with her husband or go with her child? It is a cruel difficulty. A divided duty and a marring of her happiness either way. The sacrifice of the duties and joys of her wifehood on the one side, of her motherhood on the other.

Mrs. Campbell's own mind was made up. She wished to remain with her husband. How terribly lonely he would be without them! And how he would be cheated! The khansaman's and the bearers' bills—who would control them then? They were excellent servants, but the parable of the "unjust steward" is true servants' gospel the whole world over. Her life in India was thoroughly and completely happy. She occupied the highest social position there. She had her large and beautifully furnished house, with its lovely grounds, a large retinue of well-trained servants, a carriage to drive in, horses to ride. Here she could give her kindness and her hospitality full play. She could command a large and liberal mode of living. She had about her a society of ladies and gentlemen. She had troops of friends. Above and beyond all this was the dear companionship of her husband—John Campbell was good to live with, he was so gentle and kind and considerate, so unselfish, so thorough a gentleman—that true and complete companionship which is not always to be found in married life. But these things concerned only *her*: she could set aside the consideration of them. What was

the best for the others—that was the only thing that weighed with her. To whom was her presence most necessary? To her husband, she thought.

He, on the other hand, was most urgent that she should go with the child. He put it solely on the ground of the advantage to the child; but she knows that he wishes to spare the mother and child the pain of parting, that he would rather be the lonely one, the one to suffer.

The question would not have stood in need of discussion to-day, as the child was not to “go home” before the end of the year, were it not that Mrs. Campbell had received a letter from her sister, who is to take the child in case Mrs. Campbell does not go herself, saying that her plans have been altered, that she cannot now wait for the cold season, but has to leave for England the moment she can, in July.

They are seated in Dr. Campbell's study, which looks bright and cheerful, notwithstanding that along the whole length of the top of one of the large and well-filled bookshelves runs a row of grinning human skulls—those vacant domes of thought, those empty palaces of the soul.

“July is such a bad month to go home in,” says Dr. Campbell.

“Not at all,” says Mrs. Campbell. “It is better to reach England at the beginning of summer than of winter.”

“I think you had better wait until January next, and then take her home yourself.”

“It would be such a great thing for her to escape August and September here,” says Mrs. Campbell wilily.

“My dear,” says Dr. Campbell earnestly, “think how much the poor little thing will suffer at being parted from both of us—she who has been so much with us.”

Mrs. Campbell would have liked to be able to make some quick and sufficient reply to this, but her heart will not let her.

"And think if she were to get ill in England with no one to look after her."

"There would be Joan"—that was her own sister—"and your sisters."

"My love, no one can supply the place of a mother to a child of that age."

That is the shaft that goes home. Poor Mrs. Campbell cannot say anything for some moments—she has such a sharp pang at the heart. Then she says, "But how can I go away, John, and leave you here?"

"Why not?"

"All alone by yourself, with no one to take care of you?"

"Oh, I can take care of myself."

Mrs. Campbell is too wise to give her real opinion on that point—to urge an argument which may defeat her wishes.

"And I am thinking of myself, John. We have been together twenty years, and how can I leave you now?"

"We must not think of ourselves, but of her."

"We have to think of ourselves too."

"It is the arrangement that I should like best."

"What! that I should go away from you, John? Thank you! I know many husbands are happiest when they are away from their wives, but I did not expect that from you, John."

"My dear," began Mr. Campbell, when a voice was heard without the screen of split bamboos which hung before one of the doorways of the room (the Campbells prefer these to curtains, notwithstanding that the latter are considered English, while to the former attaches the opprobrium of being Indian)—was heard exclaiming, "Can I come in?" and Colonel Grey enters with his brisk, springy walk and his bright, cheerful face.

"I am sure Henry will agree with me," says Mrs. Campbell, "that I had better not go to England, but remain with you."

"Hardly, as he has sent his own wife home with the children," says Dr. Campbell.

"What! discussing the old question again?" says Colonel Grey. "I thought you had agreed to leave it alone for another six months."

Then Mrs. Campbell tells him of her sister's letter; lays the case before him. And now from without comes the short, sharp clanging of a small pony's hoofs. The subject of the conversation, the object of so much thought and care—it is strange, almost awful, to think of how much good or ill, happiness or unhappiness, to others we each one may be the cause—is returning from her morning ride. She will soon be in the room; so Colonel Grey says quickly, "My advice is this: I think Jean should go home with Helen. It would be too great a grief for the child to be parted from both of you at once. She would fret terribly. She is so very tender-hearted. She will be taken away from this, the only home she has ever known, which has become part of her life, separated from her ayah and her bearer, from her pony and her dog. And to be separated from you both at the same time—why, it will be like death to her."

"You must go, Jean," says Dr. Campbell energetically.

"It is not as if there were several children who could support and console one another. I am here for the next two years, and Jock and I can take care of one another during that time. Jock has all his furlough due to him. When I leave he goes home on three years' furlough. Five years hence it will be time to send Helen to a finishing school; she will then be old enough to take care of herself. There will be plenty of people to look after her—your sisters, my wife, who I am afraid is not likely ever to rejoin me in India again;" and a cloud passes over his usually sunny face. "You both return to India together. Then, at the end of another three years, Jean runs home for a year and brings Helen out, a grown-up young woman, a finished young lady."

The subject of his remarks now raises the bamboo screen hanging before one of the outer doors and runs into the room. Her coming in was like the entrance —

I pause: I was, as the reader anticipates, about to write "of a ray of sunshine;" but at that time and place a ray of sunshine was a symbol of distress and not of gladness, a thing to be anathematized and not blessed. But certainly the child seems to have the sunshine in the sweet twists and tangles of her beautiful hair, which, blown about as it is now, looks like a golden mist. Her coming produces a radiance on her father's face, a brightness on her mother's—all the brighter because the dreaded breaking-up of the home has been deferred for another year.

"Yes, that will do admirably," says Dr. Campbell joyfully.

"And May Wynn wants Helen to be one of her bridesmaids," says Mrs. Campbell in a glad and happy voice, the gladness and happiness of which have, of course, no concern whatsoever with May Wynn or her marriage.

"Is she talking about her bridesmaids already? Why, she was engaged only yesterday morning," says Dr. Campbell as he passes the long fingers, which have performed so many a difficult and dangerous operation, lovingly and tenderly over his little daughter's sunny locks—she had come up at once to his broad knees and was leaning tenderly against them—and presses the golden head gently towards him, as if the thought were passing through his mind that he has possession of her for a little while longer.

"Of course not," says Mrs. Campbell. "But of course we had a long talk about her engagement at Mr. Melvil's last night."

May Wynn and Mrs. Campbell are great friends; Mrs. Campbell has been as a mother to her.

"And that was how she came to mention that she should like Helen for a bridesmaid. The marriage is to take place a little before Christmas; her father wants her to complete her year with him."

"Naturally," says Dr. Campbell as he draws his own only daughter still more fondly towards him.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE EASTERN DAY.

THOUGH it is the morning after Mr. Melvil's delightful surprise of a dance, this is not the first time that Dr. Campbell and his little daughter have met. The sun had not risen when they had gone out together for the walk they had taken in company every morning ever since she could walk, while behind them came the buggy in which he was to make his professional round, and the pretty little pony on which she was to take her morning gallop. And Colonel Grey has also had his morning ride. And Mrs. Campbell has long been busy with her usual outdoor and indoor work. But still to-day the boom of the morning gun has not been the signal of awakening to the English folk of the station as it usually is, for at the time of its firing a good many of them are only just getting into bed. And the horses have only just got home, and can hardly be taken out again. So the Mall has not as many people riding and driving on it as usual. Stout old Colonel Barnes has his early morning cup of tea in bed, and then turns over for another sleep. A whole day in a snipe jheel, a whole day after game, anywhere, does not tire Major Coote; but a social function like that of the night before does very much, and so he too lies in bed and forgoes his usual morning walk. Young Walton and young Hill prolong their slumbers in the garden long after the sun is up.

But those cool, fresh morning hours are deemed by many too precious not to be made use of. Mr. Melvil

himself is out a very little after his usual hour. He visits the palace to inspect the progress of the work, in the carrying out of which those specially long ladders have had to be employed ; he rides out to an ancient royal garden without the walls, where, too, the Nuwâb has requisitioned some new work to be done. It is a favourite place of visit with the Sikunder Begum ; she wants a new sleeping pavilion built there. " She is always wanting something," Mr. Melvil says to himself angrily. When Beatrice Fane calls to Lilian—their beds are placed side by side in the middle of the room, so as to get the benefit of the punkah—the latter replies in the words of the sluggard, " You have waked me too soon ; I must slumber again," and remains in bed, to the disgust of the man pulling the punkah, whose labours are thereby prolonged another couple of hours—others' sleeping is his waking. But Beatrice herself is soon spinning over the smooth roads with William Hay in his dogcart. And this morning above all others May Wynn will not forgo her usual morning drive with her father. Philip Lennox, with the lover's greed, had been very urgent with her to ride out with him ; but no, she must drive her father out as usual, though she will have a walk in the Public Gardens with Philip afterwards.

Maud Hilton had not more than an hour's sleep. Tossing restlessly on her bed, she had welcomed the sound of the morning gun as a signal to arise. Dressing herself noiselessly so as not to awaken Agnes, their beds being also side by side under the same punkah, she steps out of the room and mounts the inner staircase leading on to the lofty flat-terraced roof. She mounts to the highest level of it. A profound silence reigns around. The night sounds have ceased, those of the day not yet begun, or if they have, they do not reach up to that height. It is the solemn awakening of the day. The wan moon is fading away in the west ; the east is beginning to glow and dim the splendour of the morning star. From where she stands the eye has command of a vast sweep of landscape, but in this dim

light it does not obtrude itself upon her notice. She is alone with her sorrow. She wrestles with it. She does not seek to ignore it. She will meet it face to face. She will set it before her in all its due proportion. Yes, he was the most personable man she had ever known—her very ideal of a man, both in person and character. She had never met another like him, should never meet another like him : men like him are not common. He had never carried his attentions to her to the extent that it was dishonourable of him to draw back. He was not a man to do anything dishonourable. But he had most undoubtedly been attracted to her. There was a great similarity in their characters. Had not those chattering women, who spoil so many matches, but whose sharp eyes do see things, begun to look wise and talk ? Had she not observed significant looks when she and Captain Lennox were together ? He had undoubtedly sought her company. It had seemed as if warm friendliness might pass into a still warmer feeling. It might have been ; it would have been ; she might have been the happiest of women. Then comes a fierce tumult of sorrow and regret and vain imaginings, the latter the worst of all. How perfect would her life have been ! On what a pinnacle of joy should she have been set ! How she would have bent all her powers to make him happy ! What love and service she would have rendered him ! How she would have devoted her whole life to him ! Oh, sad sorrow of the “ might have been ” ! These thoughts were almost too much for her ; they almost overpowered her—almost set loose the tears, which must then flow in torrents. But her pride, her enormous power of self-control, came to her aid. She, Maud Hilton, allow an unreturned love to overpower her ! She, Maud Hilton, weep for a man ! He is worth weeping for, but she shall not weep. Her grief had almost overthrown her. She had leant her loosened frame against the parapet wall ; she had placed her elbows upon it ; her head had for a moment sunk into her hands. The shock has made her reel, but she will

not let it bear her down. She means to ride proudly through the lists of life. She lifts herself up into a standing posture. She plants herself firmly on her feet. She throws back her head. She puts her outward senses, her hearing and seeing, to work again. She listens to the rising hum of the town, to the far-off cawing of the crows wending their way towards the city from their distant leafy roosting-places. She sets herself to notice the gradual brightening of the sky. She watches the gradual coming into view of the widespread landscape around. She turns her eyes down on the city beneath her—looks down on the English quarter. There is the tall spire of the church, and behind it the high-pitched thatched roof of the bungalow in which May Wynn dwells with her father. Had it not been for her coming! And why had Lennox preferred her? Wherein was May superior to herself? She had a slimmer waist—that she would allow. Who had the better intellect? Who the stronger character? Who the nobler nature? Who was the better fitted to mate with him? Was it because of her soft, languishing ways, of her wily sweetness, her designing gentleness, her artful feminality, the influence of which over men is so well understood? What! the grand concave of the heavens and the beautiful spread of the earth shut out from her gaze again! What! struck blind again! Once more is she called upon to fight—but what ignoble foes! She was not ashamed to struggle with her sorrow. Unmaidenly to allow that she loved him—how can she deny the fact? What woman could help it? That sorrow is a fierce and a strong enemy, but not an ignoble one. But these—envy and mean detraction—they shall not overcome her. No; May Wynn is worthy of him—has won him by no mean arts—well worthy of him. No, no; that sweetness and gentleness and distinctive womanliness are indeed her own—are genuine and not assumed. She may not be what is called a clever woman, but she is no silly fool. She has plenty of information, plenty of mental power, has received the highest education. Her

gifts of mind and person and character are all above the common. As worthy a representative of English womanhood she as he of English manhood. She is well worthy of him. God grant them both a happy life !

The burden has fallen from her. The pain of the wound cannot be assuaged in a moment, the scar of it may remain for life, but she has won in the fight.

There is now about the house, as she descends into it, all the bustle of the early morning hours. The bearer is dusting the furniture in this room, the sweeper sweeping out another, a khidmutgar preparing the early morning tea. Maud sits down to have a cup of the modern nectar, and her heaviness is still more lightened. The spiritual rests a good deal on the material. And nowhere are the reviving and refreshing and exhilarating effects of the divine herb felt so much as in the feverish, languorous East.

Then Maud descends from the upper story in which they live to the stately portico in front of the lower rooms which are occupied by the Bank. Here the horses, her sister's and her own, are standing ready saddled. She goes up and pats the proud neck of "Selim," her own steed, fondly. He is a splendid Arab horse. He has the characteristically beautiful head of his noble race in perfection. Mark the wide, open forehead, the large eye, the square jaw, the fine muzzle, the large, full nostrils ! Maud is not so excellent a horsewoman as her sister Agnes, but she has learnt all about the points of a horse, both from Agnes and from her father. She lets her eye dwell fondly on his compact, handsome frame ; lets it travel from the long, sloping shoulder to the proudly set on tail ; marks the clean, flat legs. Life is not without its consolations so long as "Selim" is her own. And now Agnes too comes down, and the two mount, and Agnes's brace of splendid black greyhounds are let loose. The sisters make their way out of the city and get on to the banks of the river, where there is a wide expanse of open, uncultivated ground, and there indulge in a long, exhilarating gallop. And

Maud Hilton's spirits rise as she feels her game little horse bounding under her. The ground consists of long, sloping sand-ridges ; as she feels him sweeping down a long, soft declivity she forgets the past—the so recent past—in the joy of the immediate present. The Arab horse has a peculiarly smooth and easy downward motion in his gallop ; and to canter down a long, smooth, gentle slope on the back of one is to enjoy one of the most delightful sensations on earth, as we can from experience say. " Black Care sits behind the horse-man," says the Latin poet, implying thereby that no one can escape from it. Leaving aside the metaphor, and coming to the actual and physical fact, there is no doubt that the best antidote for melancholy, for depression of spirits, is a good gallop through a cold, fresh, bracing atmosphere. For the time, at least, there is no doubt of it: you *can* gallop away from care. There is a superiority in riding—cavalier is a title of honour—and certainly on the back of a good horse you feel superior to everything. It is said that the great benefit of riding arises from its action on the heart. Certainly this ride has done Maud Hilton's heart great good. When they have re-entered the city and arrived at the Public Gardens, and, dismounting at one of the gateways, have walked into them, and at once encountered May Wynn and Philip Lennox strolling along a path together, Maud is able to greet them and enter into conversation with them with easy composure, even when they have moved to the favourite corner by the side of the watercourse, and are standing under the shadow of the banian tree where she had received the morning before the terrible shock of knowing for certain that Philip Lennox's preference was for May Wynn and not for her.

And here they are joined by Beatrice Fane and William Hay. And Major Fane comes sauntering up under the huge umbrella, twirling his little cane. He, of course, has to be up early, for the working hours at the arsenal are just now from six to twelve. And the number of the party is made up to what it was the morning before, for

though Lilian is not with them, Miss Lyster, the girl, if one may so call her, with the "mysterious mother," comes round the beautiful curve of the watercourse—"Elaine," some one had said as they had watched her coming along with her peculiar, graceful, gliding movement, her figure standing out so clearly, with the open water in front of her and the dark mass of shrubs and trees behind—and she stops and joins them. She, of course, had not lain in bed. For her, more than for any one else, it is necessary to seek refreshment and strength in the cold bath of the early morning air. Most so at this season of the year, with its enormous length of day, when she has to be so long with her mother. And they form a merry, laughing, rapid-speaking party; for have they not all the events of the night before to talk about? And if there is reason that some of them (Maud, and Agnes for her) should not be very joyful, there is also reason why most of them (May Wynn and Beatrice Fane, and Philip Lennox and William Hay) should be very joyful indeed.

But now it is time to be indoors; it is nearing eight o'clock. They move on together to one of the gateways of the Gardens, and there go their several ways. Since they parted here yesterday morning it has passed from the region of the unexpected into that of the expected that Philip Lennox should see May Wynn home. They have all soon reached the shelter of their respective bungalows. Soon those bungalows are all being put into a state of siege against the adverse forces of the hot wind and sun: the numerous doors and the few windows are all closed, the coarse screens of split bamboo hanging before the archways of the verandas, the finer screens of the same which hang before the outer doorways of the rooms are all let down to resist the entrance of the terrible sunshine, while thick, heavy mattresses of a peculiar kind of grass are placed against all the doorways on the westward side, whence comes daily the fierce rush of the fiery wind. And now the coolies engaged for the purpose have begun

their task of keeping these grass screens constantly wet.

To those fresh from England, with the English vigour in their veins, with the English love of movement strong upon them, these long hours of confinement in a damp, dark house are by no means agreeable. They do not care for these luxuries of the East. But to the old Indian, whose powers have been subdued to the climate, these long hours seem eminently enjoyable. How delicious the coolness ! How delightful to recline in your dimly-lighted room, book in hand, and let the cool moist air blow over you—to suck it in, lightly clad as you are, at every pore ! That pleasure of breathing the whole body over is one you do not enjoy in the West. How delightful to the overwrought nerves is the profound quiet, the deep silence, the sense of absolute freedom from intrusion ! Then there is the same pleasure of contrast, the same sense of delight at escape and shelter from the condition of things without, that you experience when seated of a winter's night in England in your warm, bright, close-curtained room, while without are the darkness and the fierce icy blast. Here you are in your cool, dark, quiet, curtained room, while without are the fierce turmoil of the sunshine, the fierce rushing of the wind, the glow, the heat, and the dust. To escape from that terrible glare alone, to escape from that terrible heat alone, to escape from those terrible dust-clouds alone, would be deemed a blessing ; but to escape from them all !

And now comes the usual quiet retired routine of the day. (All life is a routine, and, except the beginning and the end of it, there are few things in it that are not repeated a thousand times over day by day, month by month, year by year.) First the delicious cold bath in your own special bathroom ; then the big many-dished Indian breakfast ; then some hours of reading and music and work ; then tiffin ; then the quiet, very much undressed, lounge in your bedroom, or the afternoon *siesta*. And then the men, impatient for their racquets, rush out between four and five o'clock. But the ladies wait until

the sun has gone down further ere they emerge from the shelter of the house ; some wait until he has almost set. Then comes the evening ride or drive along the well-watered Mall ; the going to the band ; the meeting together for a game of croquet—tennis and afternoon tea, the pleasant garden-parties, which are now so much in vogue, were not then invented. Then for the unmarried men comes the evening at the mess. And the married folk return home to the excellent full-course dinner, with the dainty appointments and the pretty adornments of the table—the aromatic leaves or rosebuds floating in the finger glasses is a delightful custom—and the black-visaged, white-coated, big-turbaned attendants who wait so well, moving about so noiselessly on their naked feet. Then come the after-dinner hours, passed as they are here with us. And then to bed, under the waving punkah, with nothing but a sheet over you or under you. But we have not arrived at bedtime yet.

CHAPTER XV.

THE NEWS FROM MEHNDI ALI.

MRS. CAMPBELL has a dinner-party to-night. The Hiltons are dining with her. Mrs. Hilton is a great friend of hers, and she is very fond of the two girls. As May Wynn is also a great favourite with her, perhaps a greater, having come to her more for assistance and advice, the good lady had been greatly troubled when the question arose on which of the two, Maud Hilton or May Wynn, Captain Lennox was likely to bestow the golden apple of his choice. Generalizing from her own happy case, Mrs. Campbell was a warm advocate of marriage, and always liked to help on one if she could. But here she had stood aloof: how could she help the one without hurting the other? It is a very disagreeable thing to have one's feelings tugging opposite ways. What she would have liked best, perhaps, would have been for Lennox to have proposed to Maud before May came. Then there would have been none of this bother, none of this troublesome divided feeling. However, the matter is settled now, and if she is very sorry for Maud, she is very glad for May. Tommy Walton and Loo Hill are also dining with her to-night. They are great favourites with her, as indeed they are with every one in the station; for notwithstanding their boyish follies and foolishness, they are both honest, open-hearted, straightforward, mettlesome lads.

And stout old Barnes is dining to-night where he loves best to dine—at his own mess, the arrangements of which

have been brought to such a pitch of perfection by his constant loving care : where the soup is always so good and the *entrées* so toothsome (people do not care to eat the fish from the Jumna, because of the dead bodies, you know) ; and the gram-fed mutton, so fat and juicy ; and the curry, whether wet or dry, so excellent ; and the pudding a pudding ; and the overland cheese so fresh ; and the excellent wines cooled to perfection.

And Major Coote is dining at his own mess, that of the 76th, though the long function is to him more a source of sorrow than of delight, as it is to his good friend Barnes—so do men differ. What he himself likes best is the scratch meal cooked at a camp fire, on some rugged Himalayan slope, high up ; or in the depths of some tiger-haunted jungle, low down.

And Mrs. Fane has one of the dinner-parties she loves best, small and select : Mr. Melvil, and old Brigadier Moss and his wife, and Colonel Grey, and one or two others. William Hay is dining there also : this is now almost a matter of course. And May Wynn, too, has a dinner-party of her own—very small but sufficient, consisting as it does of her father and Philip Lennox and herself.

And while the English people are sitting down quietly to their dinners the Sikunder Begum is pacing her chamber restlessly, moving quickly backwards and forwards from one wall to the other. And the slave-girl is standing in the narrow balcony without, and looking down the giddy depth below her, with the thought, the firm anticipation, that some day the Begum will lead her to that low parapet and bid her jump over, or push her over, or order the eunuch, Jhundoo Khan, to cast her over. The Begum seems in the very mood for such a deed to-night : she has stormed at her, and raved at her, and beaten her, and all for nothing.

“ Ayh ! pig-begotten——”

The girl rushes into the chamber so hastily that her foot catches in something, and she stumbles ; and the Begum, taking advantage of her posture, hits her on the

back of the head with her slipper. Luckily the hard round knot into which the girl's hair is twisted breaks the force of the blow.

"Always tumbling about, you fool!" cries the Begum. "Go and call Jhundoo Khan—call him quickly. Call him at once, you——"

The girl rushes out and then rushes back again, breathless.

"He is coming!" she says, panting.

"Coming! Why did you not bring him with you? I told you to bring him with you——"

"No; only to call him," gasps the girl.

"Do you want to make me out a liar, you vile-born, foul-fed daughter of Satan?" cries the Begum furiously.

"I say that I told you to bring him with you, and you say that I told you only to call him. Do you want to make me out a liar? Do you? do you?"

The vituperation has somewhat relieved the Begum's feelings, and she is about to relieve them still further by a little use of the slipper, when the heavy inner door of the apartment is opened, the heavy *purdah* or curtain lifted, and the eunuch enters.

"What have you been about?" cries the Begum, turning upon him. "I sent for you half an hour ago."

"Half an hour ago!—two minutes ago," says Jhundoo Khan coolly.

Of course he was desirous of keeping in the Begum's good graces, more especially at this time, when there seemed so near a prospect of the Nuwâb regaining his ancient independent power, in which case the Sikunder Begum would rule the State, and be in a position to make those she favoured wealthy and powerful. But he was the Begum's keeper and not her servant; and, like those of his unhappy class, he was very sensitive to praise and blame.

"You went on with what you were doing."

"I was sitting down, and had to get up."

"Then you must have crawled up the stairs."

"I could not fly up them like a bird."

The Begum keeps a book of reprisals—in which Melvil's name has prominent entry—a mental memorandum-book of scores to be paid off. She makes an entry in it now. But she does not care to quarrel with the eunuch just at present; she has need of his services in many ways. So she turns to the slave-girl and says, "Begone, you witch!" and then, turning to Jhundoo Khan,—

"Has the messenger returned?"

"Not yet."

"He has been gone a very long time."

"It is some way to the sepoy lines, and then Rustum Khan has to communicate with Matadeen Panday. Calm yourself; they will both be here very soon, I am sure."

To calm her restlessness the Begum steps out into the balcony and lets the cool evening air rest on her bare head, meet her bare face. The beautiful balcony, with its tapering marble columns profusely adorned with inlaid work, and its exquisitely-pierced marble panels—and the beautiful woman with her lovely face and exquisite figure, which her veil of dewy lightness enveloped but did not conceal, standing out on it—would have made a charming picture. But the Begum does not stand there long: she hears the creak of the heavy door, and steps back into the room. It is the Soubahdar Rustum Khan. She welcomes him eagerly. "What is the news?" he asks, as, after their exchange of hasty greetings, he and the Begum seat themselves—she on the dais, he on a stool by its side. "Is it about the court-martial?"

"Yes."

"What is the sentence?"

"The Havildar Guffoor Khan——"

"My cousin!"

"And four others, imprisonment for ten years."

"Ten years' imprisonment!"

"And all the others five years."

"They shall not suffer it!"

"It is resolved so—not even for one day. Their

brother sowars will march to the jail to-morrow afternoon and deliver them." (The men referred to were the mutinous troopers of the 3rd Cavalry at Abdoolapore, of course.) "The two sepoy regiments have agreed to join with them. They will slay their English officers, and after they have delivered the men from jail, all three regiments will march straight for here. They will march away at once, so that the English soldiers may not be able to overtake them before they have reached here."

"This will be to-morrow morning?"

"No, to-morrow evening."

"Why the delay?"

"Do you not see? If they set to work in the morning they would have to march all through the heat of the day, and perhaps not be able to cook their bread; and their movements would be known, and the infidels would be able to make their arrangements in the daytime, when every one is at his post and things are easy to be got at, and would be able to follow them quickly and gain every information about them. No, no; Mehndi Ali has arranged much better. He has sent me full particulars."

The Begum picks up from the bed what looks like a little bit of white pencil, but is in reality a long, narrow strip or ribbon of paper tightly rolled up. It is Mehndi Ali's communication, sent in this form for easy concealment about the person of the messenger; it could also in this form be more easily got rid of in case of necessity, flung away to a distance, or dropped so as not to be seen, or swallowed. From this she reads out,—

"The warriors will seize their arms to-morrow evening about sunset, at the time when the infidels are engaged in their devotions, gathered together in their place of worship, where they blaspheme the name of God, saying that He is not one, but three."

"Truly hell shall be their portion for it," says Rustum Khan.

"Seizing their arms, they will set fire to their lines and to the houses of their officers, and slay such of these as are about," reads on the Begum. "Then the English

will be confused and daunted. They will not know what is about to be attempted against them under the cover of the night. They will be taken unawares. They will not be able to make any arrangements during the night-time, not be able to get their guns out. The man in command here is like a fat buffalo. He is not active, neither in mind nor in body. There is nothing to fear from him."

The Begum is now speaking and reading in a very calm, quiet, self-possessed way ; now that she has settled down to business, her irritability and excitability have quite departed from her.

"Then, the prisoners being delivered, the three regiments will march straight for here. They will have the whole cool night to travel in."

"Then they ought to be here on Monday morning?"

"Yes, early—even if they take a rest on the way."

"Why, they may arrive just at the very time when we are on parade."

"On parade ! There are no parades now."

"Yes ; there is to be a general parade of all three regiments on Monday morning. The order was issued to-day."

"Why this ?"

"In order that we may have read out to us a proclamation of the Government in connection with the disbandment of the regiment at Barrackpore."

"When will the parade be held ?"

"At sunrise."

"They may not be here until later ; it is forty miles. But the men of your regiment are ready to join them whenever they may come ?"

"Beyond doubt."

"And the men of the 76th ?"

"Yes ; it has had its face turned away from the Government for a long time. Most of the men are Brahmins. But you must make sure of the Soubahdar Matadeen Panday ; he is a Brahmin of the highest caste. He has

great influence with the men. A great deal will depend on him—everything may depend on him.”

“How is he to be secured?”

“I have told you already. Don’t you know how the Brahmins get money out of the people on every occasion they can—at a birth, or a marriage, or a death, and the various days after them. They always go about with their mouths wide open; their hands are always stretched out. They are always wanting to be fed, wanting to have something given to them; always looking for gifts and presents. The Brahmins are always seeking for money—gold, or silver, or copper; it does not matter which. And Matadeen Panday is more greedy after money even than most of his bond-brethren. You can only buy him for money.”

The Begum frowns. On her face has been a quiet look of fixed thought, of set reflection; but now there suddenly comes over it a curious expression, the meaning of which Rustum Khan does not understand at all, because he is not acquainted with the circumstances which have produced it. At this moment the Begum is thinking how she might have purchased Matadeen Panday’s adherence otherwise than by money. The old Brahmin had wished to establish amorous relations with her; had aspired to be her paramour.

But the Begum had rejected his advances peremptorily. Her principles were lax; but she did draw a line, the line of religion: her favours were confined within the circle, the pretty wide circle, of the Faith. That was her standard of honour. That was where her religious principles came in. Not even for the sake of the cause on whose success her heart was so much set could she violate that rule, and admit an infidel to her arms.

“Well, then, he must be bought.”

“It is the more necessary to secure him, because the city guards next week are to be furnished by his regiment, and he himself will be in command of the guard at the palace here.”

“Ha! one of the first things to be done on Monday

will be to obtain possession of the gates of the city and of the palace here. Yes; he must be secured. The next thing to be done will be to gain possession of the arsenal and of the Government treasury."

"It may not be so easy to gain possession of the arsenal."

"Why not?"

"The gates are strong."

"There are only six or seven Englishmen in the arsenal."

"There are the Khulasees, the men on the fixed establishment."

"They are not trained men like your sepoy."

"But if the Englishmen only close the gates, how are we to force them open? There is no water before the gate opening on to the river just now, and there is no moat before the gate opening into the city; but still the gates are very strong, and we have no means of blowing them open—we have no guns."

"If you cannot get through the gates, you must get over the walls," says the Begum.

"How?" says Rustum Khan.

"By means of ladders."

"But we have no ladders. The walls are very lofty. We should need scaling-ladders—very long ladders."

"They have been provided for us," says the Begum, smiling.

"Provided for us! By whom?" says Rustum Khan, looking puzzled.

"By Mr. Melvil," says the Begum, with a laugh.

"Mr. Melvil! In what way?"

"In connection with the repairs to the palace. Very tall ladders. They are standing in the east courtyard now."

"Good! how good!" says Rustum Khan. "What a mind your Highness has!"

"Things are done by thinking," says the Begum. "The seizure of the magazine must be your business, Rustum Khan."

"Very well."

“And you must devote to-morrow to thinking over what has to be done and in what manner it can be done. You must make arrangements with the Soubahdar Matadeen Panday and the others who are on our side. *Futteh ba bundobust*” (“arrangements ensure success,” or, “victory (comes) from arrangements”), says the Begum, repeating her favourite maxim.

The heavy curtain is lifted, and the eunuch, Jhundoo Khan, habitual betrayer of his trust, ushers the Soubahdar Matadeen Panday into the room. After an interchange of complimentary greetings (the Soubahdar is very much of a ladies’ man, after the Oriental fashion), the Begum desires him to be seated, with her most honeyed words and in her sweetest manner. Then she proceeds to business at once : raises the epistle from Mehndi Ali Khan, which hangs down like a long curl, and informs him of the contents of it.

“The three regiments will be here early on Monday morning. They take possession of the city. The English are driven out or slain. We regain our ancient sovereignty.”

“They will only throw away their means of livelihood—incur great loss, as the two regiments that have mutinied in Bengal have done,” says Matadeen Panday, shaking his head.

“They will not lose, but gain,” says the Begum. “What rewards shall not be bestowed on those who place kings and princes on their thrones again?”

“All this if they succeed. But they may fail.”

“We cannot fail if we are only bold and brave enough. And you are not a *dhurphokna*” (a colloquialism corresponding to our “funk-stick”), “Soubahdar Sahib! You have displayed your valour on many a battlefield.”

This was an appeal to the old man’s vanity, which she knew was large.

“I can be brave enough for my own profit, but not to my loss,” says the old Brahmin coolly.

“Loss! there can be no loss! And look at the gain! You obtain the command, the full command, of your

regiment, in which you are now of less account than the English sergeant. You obtain a thousand rupees a month, instead of your beggarly sixty or seventy. All this at once ; and hereafter titles and honours, an estate."

"What I have, I have," says the old man sententiously. "What I may have, I may have ; but I have it not. One bird in the hand is worth many in the bush. The dog opened his mouth to catch the shadow, and lost the bone. My means of subsistence is secure for the rest of my life. In two years more I get my pension. I can then eat my bread sitting at home."

"If there is any one to give it to you. But if the Company's *raj* [rule] is overset, where will be your pension then ?"

"If——"

"It must be."

"Keep to the certain until the uncertain becomes the certain," says the old soldier-priest. Such play on words is much loved by Orientals. The passages in Shakespeare filled with elaborate conceits and an elaborate play on words—to the very crack of doom—such as the one in which occurs the line, "A single-soled jest solely singular for the singleness"—which have lost all merit with us would still be highly valued in the East.

"I like certainties," he says, stroking his long projecting chin. "While the Company is supreme I know what to do. When the power of the King of Delhi and the Nuwâb of Khizrabad is re-established, I shall know what to do too."

"They are about to be re-established."

"*Befayeda*" ("no good"—literally, "without profit"), says Rustum Khan, looking at the Begum significantly. "Words will not do it. And we are losing time. There are many things to settle."

The Begum would rather have gained her point by argument. She did not like parting with any of her garnered security, any of her hoarded power. But if it must be done it must. And she goes to the point at once.

“What amount will secure us your services?”

“I am not greedy,” says the old man, “not greedy in the least. I want no more than what I have. But I like a certainty. I want a certainty to replace my certainty—a sum of money that will afford me an income equivalent to my pension. The trouble, and the risk of losing one’s life, I give you for nothing.”

The Begum descends from the bedstead. As she stands within an arm’s length of him, the old Brahmin gazes at her as the Elders of old gazed on Susannah. The Begum moves round to the back of the bedstead. She opens the huge coarse lock of the coffer with a huge coarse key. She lifts the heavy lid. She comes back again to the front of the bed with a little packet in her hand. She unwraps the piece of coarse linen, such as jewellers wrap their wares in, and gives to view a splendid jewel. How the huge gems glitter in the glare of the primitive oil-lamp, shaped exactly like the old Roman ones, which the eunuch had lighted before he left the room! How the old man’s eyes glisten in return!

“There!—the value of that will ensure you an income larger than any the Company has ever paid you or is ever likely to pay you.”

The Soubahdar extends an eager hand to meet her lagging, reluctant one. He clutches at the concentrated wealth. He holds the jewel up towards the light. His eyes drink in its brightness. How it sends forth beams of light! How the emeralds and the rubies glow! How the huge diamonds sparkle and send forth their gleams of many-coloured light! How they coruscate! Their sparkle is too much for the Begum; she must have the jewel in her hand again. Her pretty little forefinger and thumb remove it from between the long lean forefinger and square-topped thumb of the Soubahdar almost with a snatch.

“You buckle it like this——”

“Oh yes!” cries the Soubahdar as he snatches it back again, and disposes of it quickly amid the folds of his clothing.

They then address themselves to business. This does not take very long. The Begum has reduced what is to be done to a formula: "Seize the city gates, the arsenal, and the Government treasury." They will then be in possession of the great fortified city with all its historical associations and influences; have within its walls a large garrison of well-drilled soldiers; have the means of paying them; be well supplied with artillery, with guns both heavy and light, with muskets and cartridges, with weapons of every kind, with a great store of powder and shot and shell, with all the munitions of war. It would be no easy matter for the English to dislodge them. At all events, they would not be able to do so at once. They would not have the means ready. This was not the season of the year for operations in the field, and if they did not retake the city at once their chance of doing so would diminish day by day. The movement would spread. The Company had created an army the like of which for numbers, discipline, and equipment had never been seen in India before—had made and manufactured a supply of cannon, a store of all the munitions of war, such as had never been seen there before either. These great engines of success would now be turned against itself. This great ready-made army numbered five hundred thousand men. The swarms of Mahratta cavalry would take the field again; the Mohammedan powers, the Hindu powers, would raise great forces; the famous Sikh army would re-form: it was but the other day that its soldiers had been forced to lay down their arms—they were not yet reconciled to the pick and the ploughshare. Taught by former experience, Mohammedan, Mahratta, Rajpoot, Sikh, would all make common cause against the English. The white-faced intruders would be swept out of the land; would never be able to gain a footing in it again. So discourses the Begum.

"The kafir has got the better of us after all," exclaims the Begum when Matadeen Panday had departed, a little while afterwards. "He has got the certainty of

the jewel and we the uncertainty of his promise. Suppose he should prove false to us at the last ? ”

“ He will not now. He did not like to run the risk of finding himself a penniless man, forced to work or beg. If our enterprise does not succeed, why, he will seek safety in some temple, and have ample means to live there quietly and comfortably.”

“ We must succeed,” says the Begum. “ But suppose we should not, what would *you* do ? ”

“ Oh, I do not know,” says Rustum Khan with a gay, careless laugh. “ Something——”

CHAPTER XVI.

THE LAST PARADE.

THE Sunday which was to mark the beginning of the Mutiny as a widespread affair, which was to be the precursor of so many similar evil days for the English in Northern India, which at Abdoolapore was to be a witch's or devil's Sabbath—a day of blood and slaughter—passed away in Khizrabad with its usual quiet routine, with its morning service (held, as is usual at this season of the year, at six o'clock in the morning, and even then under waving punkahs) and its evening service.

We have now arrived, therefore, at the fourth day of our tale, Monday, May 11, 1857.

In the city the cry of "*Allah-ho-akber!*" from the lofty minaret awakens the sleepers, quickly or tardily, from their slumbers, in the usual daily fashion. But in the outlying English cantonment the boom of the gun on the ridge this morning produces in the lines of the three regiments and in the bungalows of their officers an immediate awakening and a bustle and movement it has not done for many months back. By sunrise the three regiments and the battery of artillery are all on the general parade-ground; and by that time all those in whose fate we are interested, or whose names we have occasion to mention, are gathered together there too. Colonel Barnes and Major Coote and Colonel Grey are of course at the head of their respective regiments; and little Brigadier Moss is there on his charger, with his

aide-de-camp behind him, in command of the whole. And there among the spectators is little Mrs. Moss in her big barouche, and Major Fane and Mrs. Fane in their carriage, and Beatrice and Lilian Fane on horseback ; and Maud and Agnes Hilton have ridden out with their father ; and Mrs. Hilton has driven herself out in the dogcart (though it is held by many that it is not proper for a lady to enter a dogcart, much less drive herself in one). May Wynn and her father have come round this way in their usual morning drive, and Lennox is by the side of their carriage on his famous coal-black war-horse. And William Hay is with his regiment ; and Tommy Walton and Loo Hill, those youthful warriors, are with theirs ; and Tommy's heart beats fast as he gazes at Lilian Fane lounging easily on her horse. And here are Dr. Campbell and Mrs. Campbell, and their dear little daughter, with her beautiful golden hair ; " Jock " looms very large in the little Victoria phaeton. And here is Mr. Melvil in his drag. With the exception of the coachmen and grooms, and the bearers and ayahs in charge of the little white-faced children, there are no natives here but the sepoys in their long serried ranks, and the artillerymen with the guns. The spectators consist entirely of the English ladies with their children and the Englishmen in the civil employ of the Government. The function is purely an English one ; it does not concern the people of the town ; at all events, there is not a single one of them here.

The Brigadier having taken up his position in front of the troops, the business of the morning begins. The proclamation, or, to be more exact, the general order by the Commander-in-chief of the army, is read out. The circumstances attending the outbreak in the 34th Regiment of Native Infantry, which formed the beginning of the great Mutiny (then took place the first shedding of the blood which was to flow in such torrents afterwards), are detailed at considerable length. They are already known to every one present, and are not listened to very attentively. Old Barnes's thoughts

are away at his bungalow, with that folded blanket in which his supply of ice for the day had been brought from the store-pit, and peeping into which before he left he had seen how distressingly small the quantity was. And young Walton is thinking only of Lilian Fane. And the Soubahdar Rustum Khan, and the Soubahdar Matadeen Panday, and a great many of the men of their respective regiments, are wondering how far off the mutinous regiments from Abdoolapore may at this moment be. More attention is paid to the latter part of the manifesto. The army of Bengal is reminded that the Government of India has "never interfered to constrain its soldiers in matters affecting their religious faith." There were many such laborious sentences. "It had no desire to do so now. It had so assured the sepoys already." If they "refused to believe these assurances, and allowed suspicions to take root in their minds, and to grow into disaffection, insubordination, and mutiny, the fault is their own and the punishment will be upon their heads. That it will be a sharp and certain punishment the Governor-General in Council warns them."

Strange to think—though, of course, the thought did not occur to any of the English people present—that the threatening came from that sprinkling of Englishmen, and was addressed to that mass of dark-faced men; that the threatened outnumbered the threateners by more than twenty to one; that the physical force was entirely on their side. Then the old Brigadier addresses a few words to the men. He has served with them for forty years, and has always been their friend. Let them prove true to their salt. Their honour and their interests went together.

In one regiment that "ruffling blade," that man of the world, the Mohammedan Soubahdar Rustum Khan, who has been in many curious scenes and situations, is thinking how strange it is that the adventure upon which he is now about to enter should be so dramatically begun. And that Brigadier Moss and all the other

officers should be going through this ceremony quite unconscious of the near approach of the mutineers from Abdoolapore—that those English ladies should be lolling in their carriages quite unconscious of the impending danger—affords the crooked Brahmin soul of the Hindu Soubahdar Matadeen Panday in another regiment a huge delight. And though the dusky faces of the sepoy show no trace of any emotion, the hearts of many among them are greatly moved at the thought of what the next half-hour may bring forth: some are elated, some greatly cast down. But now the business is over. The three regiments march off to their respective lines. The little crowd of white-faced spectators disperses, the lighter roll of their carriage-wheels mingling with the rumble of the guns. The 76th has to furnish the city guards for the ensuing week: these are told off at once on the parade-ground, and march to the city direct, William Hay being in command of them.

William Hay has dismissed his men at the Jumoo Gate; he rides on straight to the Fanes' house, which is not very far off. He finds Major Fane and Mrs. Fane and the two girls seated together in the broad, pleasant western veranda which looks out on the garden, in which, if no flowers are brightly blooming, plenty of birds are merrily singing and piping. The *chota hazree* (or "little breakfast") was eaten before they went out; but fruit is very refreshing after the morning ride, and so a number of yellow musk-melons have been set out on a little table, and Lilian is busy conveying the fragrant golden morsels to her fragrant rosy lips.

"Have some mango-fool, Will," says Lilian to Hay as he seats himself, pointing to a full bottle of that delicious compound, which has been made early in the morning and set in a freezing mixture to cool.

"Oh, I had my tea before I went out," says Hay.

"Of course I know that," says Lilian. "But you must have mango-fool too."

"No, I thank you."

"Oh yes, you must;" and she fills him out half a tum-

blerful. And then Lilian quietly watches her brother-in-law to be. Hay makes a little too much of his disregard of the pleasures of the table, or rather of all eating and drinking. "I do not care what I eat." "I eat to live, but do not live to eat," were sayings a little too frequent in his mouth. He makes too great a parade of his indifference. He makes too much of a concern of his unconcern. Lilian likes to amuse herself with this little weakness of his. She likes to draw him out. She will exaggerate her own delight in the pleasures of the palate, which is naturally keen enough. She will use that strong language loved of girls to express her liking, often pretended and got up on the spur of the moment, for some dish or drink, until she arouses him into admonition and reproof. She "dotes" on this (perhaps guava-jelly), and she "adores" that (it may be mango preserve), and this is "awfully nice," and that is "perfectly heavenly—quite divine," two phrases which are always sure to draw forth his animadversion, to "fetch him," as Lilian expressed it. Then he will reason with her upon her waste of feeling, on her misuse of language: "heavenly" applied to something to eat, a sweetmeat—"divine" applied to something to drink, a sherbet. Then Lilian will put on a pretty penitent air, and, possessing a keen sense of the ludicrous, she will laugh in her sleeve at this solemn exaggeration of petty things; and then Beatrice will get angry—she likes not this fooling of her lover—and this adds to Lilian's mischievous delight.

"The Bwigadeeah" (that was a very difficult word for him) "made a vewy good speech this morning," says Major Fane to Hay.

"Yes; a very good one," says Hay as he stretches out his hand and seizes the tumbler with the mango-fool in it, in an indifferent, unconscious sort of way. Hay eats as if he had no more taste of the food he puts into his mouth than the upper and nether millstones of the wheat put between them—as if he put it there merely to be ground. Most people have their weaknesses, the

"defect of their qualities ; " but William Hay was a very fine fellow, all the same.

Lilian watches that careless, indifferent seizing of the tumbler with huge delight.

"It ought to have a good effect on the sepoy," says Major Fane.

"It was hardly needed," says Hay, as he raises the tumbler and empties it in one or two quick, hasty, unthinking, untasting gulps—lets his mouth receive it and his throat swallow it without any concern of his own. Lilian's bright eyes twinkle.

"You should not drink off mango-fool like that," she says. "You do not get the taste of it. You ought to eat it spoonful by spoonful, as you will see me do just now, when I have finished this delicious melon. How I dote on melons ! This is a divine one."

"Some one dwinving vewy fast," says Major Fane, with his quiet drawl, as the metalled road that runs by the house rings with the sharp strokes of a horse's hoofs. Those iron-bound hoofs strike the road faster than ever lightest hammer tapped on anvil ; that horse must be a very fast one and going at topmost speed.

"He is coming in here, whoever it is," says Hay. There is a rapid roll of wheels along the avenue leading up to the fine large portico on the other side of the house.

"Give me some of the mango-fool, Lilian," says Major Fane. But at this moment a servant approaches the veranda and says that Mr. Melvil is in his buggy under the porch and desires to speak with Major Fane there. The Major rises from his chair in his usual leisurely way, and passes into the house with his usual quiet saunter. Then the same servant comes back with the message that Major Fane will not need his own buggy now, as Mr. Melvil has taken him to the Arsenal, that his breakfast is to be sent to him there as usual, and that some of the mango-fool is to go with it.

And now Mrs. Fane goes into the house to fulfil some of her early morning household duties. And Lilian, after lingering for a little while in order to enjoy the pleasure

of annoying the lovers with her unwelcome presence, has compassion on them, and departing, leaves them to the supreme enjoyment of their own company. They cannot enjoy it very long, for the *tatees*, or grass-screens, have to be placed against the doorways of this western veranda. And now Hay has mounted his horse, and is riding back to his temporary quarters. He is lounging easily along under the shade of the trees by the side of the road, when he is met by one of his men, who makes him a communication that causes him to dash forward at full speed.

CHAPTER XVII.

TRAPPED.

"WHAT is it, Melvil?" asks Major Fane as he gets to the side of the buggy in which that gentleman is seated; they had already met and exchanged the usual greetings on the parade-ground.

"I have come to tell you that the cavalry regiment at Abdoolapore has mutinied——"

"Oh!"

"So have the two infantry regiments."

"Ah!"

"And the three together are marching for this place—are now within a few miles of it."

Mr. Melvil is a courageous, a proudly courageous man; but he is the man in supreme authority here, and his responsibility is a heavy one. He has charge of this great city, and the charge is no light one. When speaking to Mrs. Hilton, the night of his entertainment, he had pooh-poohed the idea of a rising in that city; but he knows that there are turbulent classes in it which may be aroused at any moment to deeds of violence and mischief. He cannot prevent his words from being a little hurried as he makes mention of the near approach of this large body of mutineers. But Major Fane only says, "Haw!"

"I was about to drive down to my office when I got the news. I sent my orderly off with it to the Brigadier, and then came straight to you. We must keep them out of the city, and it occurred to me that they might

try and get in at your water-gate" (this was one of the two gates of the Arsenal, and opened directly on to the river bank). "If you will have that closed, I will go on and have the River Gate" (this was the gate of the city to which the bridge of boats across the river led up) "closed also. I can drive you to the Arsenal. We had better go at once. There is no need to frighten the ladies. It will be better to keep this information to ourselves until the gates are closed. All will be safe then."

"All wight," says Fane, and then calling for his hat, he gives the message about his breakfast and the mango-fool, and jumps—no, mounts leisurely—into the buggy. As they are whirling along Melvil says,—

"I suppose Moss will send a regiment down into the city at once?"

"I suppose so."

"Do you think the regiments here are to be depended upon?"

"I do not know about the 76th; it has been shaky before. But I should think the others are; the Grenadiers most certainly."

"I do not understand how these fellows have managed to get as far as this; how they were allowed to get away from Abdoolapore after they had mutinied—Abdoolapore with its mass of English troops: the Rifles and the Carabineers and the Bengal Horse Artillery."

"They got away at night."

"But the English troops must be after them. It will not be long before *they* are here too——"

That was to be the thought of every one. That was to be the supposition which was to govern the events of the day. On it everything was to turn. The arrival of the pursuing force of purely English troops was to be confidently looked for, confidently waited for, all day long.

They have reached the cityward gate of the Arsenal. Mr. Melvil does not drive in, but pulls up his flying little mare just without it. They are not surprised to see the whole of the new sepoy guard out and under arms, for

they know that it has just relieved the old one. But Fane is surprised to see here a number of his employés who should have been busy at work in the shops within. And no sooner had his foot touched the ground than several of them rushed up to him crying with open mouths,—

“Cherisher of the poor! your Highness! the sepoy from Abdoolapore are marching on the city. You can see them from the top of the wall.”

“See them!” and Mr. Melvil jumps out of the buggy too, in order to see for himself. The two Englishmen hurry up the nearest ramp that leads to the top of the wall, the wall on the river face of the Arsenal, and which forms a part of the circumvallation of the town. There is the long line of the bridge of boats; and there, a little beyond the head of it, on the farther side of the stream, is Mirzagunje, an over-river suburb, a small town in itself; and beyond that stretches the wide level plain across which runs the road leading up to the bridge of boats. There it lies in a dead straight line as far as the eye can reach. Their eyes scan it eagerly, but they see no moving body of troops upon it.

“You said you saw them,” says Major Fane to the workman, who had come up with them.

“They must have passed into Mirzagunje,” says the man. The road ran right through the suburb, which had in fact grown up along it. “There they are!” he adds in a tone of the utmost excitement. And now a troop of horsemen, in the well-known French-gray uniform of the Company’s regular cavalry, appears on the open space between the suburb and the bridge of boats, and proceeds to take possession of the head of the bridge in the orthodox fashion, according to the teaching of its English officers.

“Good!” says Major Fane.

Then appear some more squadrons, and these push rapidly across the bridge.

“To seize the other end of it, so as to prevent its being cut,” says Major Fane—“that might have been done had we known they were coming.”

"Good Heaven! I may be too late to get the River Gate shut," cries Mr. Melvil as he hurries down the incline and rushes out of the gate. "Send word of this to the Brigadier," he shouts to Fane as he jumps into his buggy and dashes away. The gateway he has just left and the one he wishes to reach are not far apart in a straight line; but the watercourse, and the houses and gardens along its bank, lie between, and he must go a long way round to get from one gateway to the other. But, on the other hand, the little mare he is driving is one of the fastest trotters in India, and the bridge across the river is long and the traffic across it just now in full flow. He ought to reach the gateway, not only before the mutineers have got to it, but before they have all passed over the bridge.

But there was one as much bent on that River Gate being kept open and not closed as Mr. Melvil was on its being closed and not kept open—one who had been watching that first emergence of the troops from the suburb across the river and their taking possession of the head of the bridge with as keen an interest as he. She is eagerly looking down on the bridge of boats now—she, for it was the Sikunder Begum. The Begum had stepped out on to the balcony of her chamber that morning when the morning star was still blazing brightly in the saffron-tinged sky, before the morning gun had sent forth its roar from the ridge, before the strong-voiced muezzin had made strenuous proclamation of the greatness of his God from the summit of the lofty minaret. From the earliest moment that she could see across the river her eye had been bent on the long straight line of road beyond the transpontine suburb.

While the English girls had been donning their riding-habits and the English officers their uniforms; while the regiments were drawn up on parade; while the Government manifesto was being read out; while the Brigadier was making his appeal, she had been on the watch. The saffron tint has faded away. The great concave of the sky has assumed that sober gray tint, as if it were made

of lead, which it wears during most days of the year. The clear bright light has broadened over the land. The great orb has lifted itself above the full, low, level line of the horizon. But still they come not. In a few hours the whole of that extensive view will become invisible in the excessive sunshine. But just now it stands out clear. The line of road is quite distinct. But there is no moving mass upon it. Still they come not. But what is that now—that long trailing cloud of dust, too long even for a great herd of cattle? And it is coming this way; at this morning time the herds of cattle would be leaving the city and not returning to it, would be going in the other direction. The dust-cloud draws nearer and nearer. It is they. She can distinguish the uniforms.

“Hiria!” she calls in her sharp and clear, her thin but ringing voice. The dull-faced slave-girl comes up to the doorway outside which the Begum is standing.

“Call Jhundoo Khan—quick—run! Make long legs, you black-faced witch!” she calls after her, as the girl hurries across the wide floor of the beautiful chamber.

“Look, Jhundoo Khan—what is it you see there?” cries the Begum, when the eunuch stands beside her. (What a great contrast in their stature: she so short—he, or it, so tall!) “There on the road, where the dust is.”

“The great cloud of dust?”

“Yes—yes——”

“*Rissalah*” (cavalry), says Jhundoo Khan. “*Sipahi log*” (sepoys), he adds.

“It is they!” cries the Begum. “They will soon have passed through Mirzagunje and got to the bridge. Tell Hyder Ali” an officer of the Nuwâb’s troops—“to hurry down with twenty men to the River Gate and take possession of it. The sepoys will make no opposition; if they do, let him say he has the Nuwâb’s orders. He must seize the gate and keep possession of it. He must not let it be closed on any account. On his head be it! Quick!”

As the foot-passengers tumble out of the way, they marvel more than ever at the wonderful speed of the

Commissioner Sahib's well-known little mare. How she devours the road ! Now to one of the gateways of the Ghilani Bâgh, and into the garden and across it. What foolish, useless twists and windings in the road ! But at all events there is nothing upon it but the sunshine. And now out of the garden and on to another public road ; along the side of the watercourse for a while ; over the bridge by the mills, with a sharp turn which nearly swings the syce from off the little seat behind ; madly sharp round many another corner, for this road is a bye one, not laid out straight, running in zigzags ; but it is the short cut to the main road which runs up from the River Gate to Star Street, and it has soon conducted Mr. Melvil thither. At this early morning hour this great thoroughfare is thronged with Hindus going down to the river to bathe or returning from it, as we have already seen. Melvil had expected some delay here, but nothing like the delay he actually encounters ; the road is not now, as usual, loosely thronged with loose family groups strolling quietly down to the river, or strolling back still more quietly, so as not to destroy the cooling effects of the bath—with people going this way and that, easily and with no special intensity of purpose ; but it is densely and compactly crowded ; the members of each family have now drawn closely together into a compact mass, and the movement is now wholly in one direction ; the tide sets in from the gate : the crowd is rushing one way, up from the gate and towards Star Street, with a passionate intensity of purpose. For those composing the crowd belong mostly to the better, the wealthier, the banking, money-lending, trading classes of the town, and they have been desperately anxious, from the moment they became aware of the approach of the mutinous regiments, to get back to their homes and shops and warehouses—to get their wives and daughters, their children laden with ornaments, within doors ; desperately anxious to get back to their shops in order to put up the shutters—back to their houses in order to close the heavy gates and get the valuables underground—fast

homeward, if only to get their trembling wives and daughters out of the open, to save them from injury and violence, from the ribaldry with regard to which they, the husbands and fathers, are so sensitive, and to which the Company's sepoys, grown insolent, are so prone even in peace time.

Order and security have reigned in the town under the English rule ; but the memory of the evil times before it has not yet passed away. The last sack was not so long ago but that the fathers and mothers of many of them had witnessed that scene of horror and told them of it. If no such general sack is held possible under the strong rule of the English, there may, at all events, be a period of lawlessness and disorder, in which they, the people with something to lose, will be the ones to suffer.

And so it is in vain that the groom, jumping down from his seat and running ahead, calls out, "Make way for the Commissioner Sahib—the Commissioner Sahib—Milmil Sahib !" At any other time the mere mention of Mr. Melvil's name would have opened a way for him through the densest crowd. But now he can only get on little by little—by taking advantage of every opening. He could not have got on at all had not the crowds been composed so largely of women and children, of families trying to keep as close together as possible. However, he gets on little by little. And now he is nearing the gateway. And now a strange thing happens. He suddenly finds the interval between himself and the gateway completely open and free ; and every moment that open space increases. The tail end of the crowd recedes from the gateway as the rear rank of a regiment might have done. There falls upon the road that sudden sense of vacuity, and solitariness, and silence that attends the passing away of a crowd. As Mr. Melvil jumps out of the buggy and advances towards the gateway, he finds himself absolutely alone in front of it. How is it that there are no people coming through it now ? How is it that there is no sentry on guard ? He passes into the gateway—he has approached it from one side. There

is no one in the long vaulted passage but the blind beggar who sits there every day asking for alms. Where are the men of the guard?—they have their quarters in the gateway. He passes out of the gateway, and then he understands it all. The flow of the stream has been suddenly cut off, the procession suddenly severed.

Along the road on the right-hand side stand the sepoy's of the guard in their uniforms and with their arms in their hands; along the road on the left-hand side, the river-bank side, stand a body of the Nuwâb's troops and a squadron of the newly-arrived rebel cavalry, and behind the ranks of these are huddled together the rest of the crowd of bathers who would otherwise have gone rushing through the gate. The passage through the gateway is kept clear for the main body of mutineers, whose near approach is announced by a great cloud of dust a little way farther down the road. As Mr. Melvil comes out of the gateway and stands still and looks around him, taking in the situation at a glance, there is a sudden silence, a concentration of all eyes upon him. It is a curious situation. The sepoy's of the guard and the Nuwâb's men look at him with anxious eyes, for they know who he is—the Burra Sahib (big man), the representative of the mysterious Company which wields an imperial sway; and he has caught them in the very act of aiding the mutineers. Then a voice shouts down from a window in the gateway, "He is by himself; there is no one behind him;" and then the troopers from Abdoolapore, with whom the sanctity attaching to the person of an Englishman in India has been broken—whose swords bear the stain of the blood of their English officers, and of their wives and children—raise a shout of "*Mar Feringhee sala ko!*"—"Slay the Feringhee brother-in-law!" (brother-in-law is a very opprobrious epithet in the East), a cry to be heard terribly often in the coming months; and then two of them dash forward with their drawn swords in their hands.

There is nothing now for Mr. Melvil but to run. As he does so there sweeps through him a sudden sense of

humiliation, the more especially as the mocking shout of the sepoys and the Nuwâb's ragamuffin rout of men, their sudden poise of feeling gone, falls upon his ears ; and there arises, flashes up in him, a bitter determination to avenge this hour ! He have to run ! He—he who had moved through the land like a monarch—and from these black fellows who had bowed down to him so obsequiously ! The mocking cries follow him. The delight of bringing down these mighty ones from their seats ; the joy of inflicting humiliation upon them ; the bitter endurance of that humiliation, and the bitter and bloody retaliation for it, were to find a recognizable place in the history of the time. Melvil could almost have found it in his heart to fold his arms and face them, and let them cut him down where he stood. But the instinct of self-preservation is strong. And they shall not enjoy the triumph of taking his life. He shall live to foil and punish them. And so he darts back through the gateway with the troopers after him. Well was it for him—or, perhaps, after all, not well—that he was very swift of foot. He has gained the buggy and mounted into it safe ; the fiery little mare has dashed forward at headlong speed. So swiftly does she fly that he must soon overtake the cityward moving crowd, the rear-most ranks of which have not yet traversed even half the distance between River Gate and Star Street. The two troopers are riding furiously after him. When he overtakes the crowd the troopers must overtake him. He cannot dash through the throng. He must be brought to a sudden standstill. He has taken the precaution to have a brace of loaded pistols placed behind the cushions of the buggy. But if both the troopers set on him at once he will not be able to shoot more than one of them ; and he may be set upon by some in the crowd. There are, of course, men of all classes in it, and race and religious antipathies are very strong and easily awakened. If he only had his good horse “Musjid” under him ! But it is no good wishing.

This broad straight road is the new one. The old one

was a more winding one and passed close by one of the palace gates. The ancient trees on either side of it had grown to a great size, and formed a magnificent over-arching avenue ; it had not been abandoned altogether therefore, but retained as a pleasant walk or ride. It is not now a driving road, but he must take it. The opening into it is now close before him. It is a very sharp and dangerous turn ; but that will afford him the same advantage that a double does to a hare—the pursuers will shoot by. They do shoot by, and he is dashing forward along his new way by himself. He flies over the grass-grown, if irregular, surface with but little noise, so little noise that after the quick clatter of the mare's hoofs on the metalled road it seems like silence ; swiftly by the huge stems and massive high-raised roots, and beneath the interlacing boughs of the ancient trees ; swiftly, to the great troubling of the pretty squirrels playing about in security in the middle of the road. But the two troopers are soon on the road too ; and they are well mounted and ride hard. They have now caught him up. He tries to keep well to the left side of the road, so that they may not be able to lay themselves on his left and their right-arm side. But he had now got a pistol in his right hand, and so had not full command of the reins, and he has to keep clear of the massive projecting roots. One of these has escaped his notice, and in order to avoid it when he sees it he has to bear very hard on the right rein, and this sends the tender-mouthed mare to the right side of the road. A trooper seizes the opportunity, and grazes by the left wheel of the buggy, and his arm is uplifted to strike, when there is a flash, a report ; the man reels in the saddle, then falls headlong to the ground, and the riderless steed dashes madly away. The other trooper pulls up, either fearing a similar fate, or in order to help his fellow-comrade. Melvil reaches the end of the road, and deems himself safe, for close before him rises up the gate, the Gate Magnificent, of the palace-fortress. He is rattling over the drawbridge ; he has passed through the gateway, and pulled up before the

adjoining building in which Major Kent, the officer in special charge of the palace, has his quarters. He finds Kent himself just descending from his buggy; he has been up to the cantonment so see the Brigadier, and hearing from him of the approach of the mutineers has hurried back.

"You have heard about the mutineers from Abdoolapore? They are nearing the town," calls out Kent.

"They are in it by this time," says Melvil; and then he gives a rapid account of his experiences of the past half-hour, and says,—

"You must get the gates of the palace closed—this one at once."

Not far from them stands the Soubahdar Matadeen Panday with the men of the newly-arrived guard. These are joined, while the two Englishmen are speaking, by the eunuch Jhundoo Khan, accompanied by five or six of the Nuwâb's retainers, all armed with sword and shield, and some bearing firearms in addition.

Major Kent orders the sepoy to close the gates and release the rollers that raise the drawbridge; but not a man stirs.

"Do not they understand what I say?" says Major Kent, turning to Matadeen Panday furiously. He is a choleric man.

"Your words are clear enough," say Matadeen Panday.

"Then why do they not obey them?" cries Major Kent.

"The Nuwâb Sahib has sent word," answers the Soubahdar, waving his hand towards the eunuch, "that the gate is to be kept open. The palace is his."

Major Kent was a man of extraordinary stature—over six feet three—and of extraordinary strength.

"We must close the gates ourselves, Melvil," he cries, and turns to move towards them.

The eunuch draws a huge horse-pistol from the voluminous cummerbund round his waist, and stepping forward a pace or two, so as to diminish still further the very

small distance between them, shoots poor Major Kent in the back—a felon stroke. The Englishman's strength and stature avail him nothing now ; he falls forward flat on his face.

“ Seize him ! ” shouts, or rather shrieks, the eunuch, pointing to Melvil. “ Seize him ! but do not kill him. Take great care you do not kill him. The Begum wants him for her prisoner.”

And in a few seconds Mr. Melvil is standing there a prisoner, his pistols wrested from him.

And so ended the first act in the drama of the day—ended most disastrously for the English interests. The absence from his post of the man in supreme civil authority would have been a great misfortune in any case ; was the more so when he fulfilled such special functions as here ; was the more so when he was a man like Mr. Melvil, a man of such mental capacity, such energy and decision of character ; was the greater because vigour and energy were just the qualities now wanting in the man in chief military command ; was the greater because it was not known during the whole course of the day what had become of him.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“ KILL AND SLAY.”

THE mutineers have passed through River Gate. As the column moves up toward Star Street it is soon accompanied on either flank by a leaping, shouting, yelling, continually increasing crowd of men and boys, those youthful blackguards who play such a prominent part in all popular commotions. Along the whole length of the column is a broad fringe of roughs and ruffians. For as those to whom a day of disorder is likely to be a day of loss withdraw into their houses, so do those to whom it is likely to be a day of gain issue forth from their dingy, frowzy dwelling and hiding places. The night-birds fly forth; the thieves and robbers think that they may to-day usurp the privilege of honest men and pursue their calling openly under the sun—they need no longer be the minions of the moon. The “ Devil’s Quarter ” is already on the move; for the news of the arrival of the mutineers has begun to spread like wildfire—not in the usual understanding of the phrase, but as the jungle fire really spreads, not in one broad sheet, but fastest along the most favourable lines, so that it may reach to a mile in one direction and not extend a hundred yards in another.

We must dwell on the way the news spread, for it greatly affected the course of events that day—the fate of many. Many English people lost their lives because the news did not penetrate soon enough into the quiet quarters in which their houses stood. As the jungle fire will run swiftly along a belt of dry grass and slowly

along one of green bushes or scrub ; as the flying sparks will kindle a conflagration at some distant point and leave the intermediate space untouched—so was it here. The news flew down Star Street to its farthest extremity, while it advanced but a little way down many streets far nearer to its point of starting. Sheitanpara, the “ Devil’s Quarter,” was in a blaze while many another quarter far nearer to the River Gate lay in its usual morning coolness and quiet. While the column of mutineers, with its attendant crowd of roughs and ragamuffins, was passing up the road between River Gate and Star Street, there was no knowledge of its presence at the Bank House, though it stood but a few furlongs off that main line of communication. Mrs. Hilton and her two daughters are seated in the pleasant upper veranda which has command of the public gardens. The open air and exercise have done Maud Hilton good, and as her mother glances at the noble-browed face, its usual expression of calm steady strength now softened and relieved by something she is reading in her book, she cannot but wonder in her mother’s heart—sorrowfully wonder, for she herself liked him very much—that Philip Lennox should not have followed the first promptings of his heart. She is not unjust to May Wynn ; she is a dear, sweet, pretty girl. But her Maud !—there is none like her, no, not one. Hers the lofty nature that would best have matched with his own. And Mrs. Hilton’s bright face is overcast. But as her younger daughter recalls something amusing that had happened at the parade-ground, it clears again and she bursts into a hearty laugh. And as the *myna*, one of the best bird-talkers in the world, whose cage is hanging in the veranda, gives a more than usually ludicrous imitation of the asthmatic cough of the old tailor (in India you keep your own tailor), with whom he has been in the house for the past ten years, and by the side of whose carpet his big cage is generally placed, Mrs. Hilton laughs out loud again, and her laughter is so full and hearty and genuine that it is always very contagious, and so they are all soon laughing merrily together.

And as a servant comes in with the letters they all look at him eagerly, for the mail was signalled at Bombay some days ago. Yes, here they are—English letters, letters from England, letters from home. And they are soon absorbed in their contents and carried thousands of miles away.

“What a great noise in River Gate Road!” says Agnes, lifting her head.

“There always is a noise there in the morning,” says Mrs. Hilton, not lifting hers.

And while the news has flown right across the city and far out into the country beyond, it has not yet reached Melvil Hall; its usual stately quiet reigns around the splendid mansion. While Mr. Melvil is a prisoner and captive (well might they have been prayed for in those days), his large and well-ordered establishment is pursuing its usual routine; his dogs are being washed, his horses groomed, his bath being filled, his clothes laid out, his breakfast prepared.

The cantonment too is aflame; there is a great stir and bustle there. The orderly sent by Mr. Melvil had carried the news of the approach of the mutineers to the Brigadier; messengers sent forward by the mutineers themselves had carried it to the sepoy lines, and when the sepoys got back from the parade they found it awaiting them; so that when the officers who had dispersed to their bungalows came galloping back with urgent orders to turn the men out again, they were very much surprised to find them all with their uniforms on—they had never taken them off. There is a great commotion in the cantonment. Officers who had thought that they had got out of the sun for the rest of the day are soon galloping about in it again. Stout old Colonel Barnes, having unbuckled his belt with a sigh of relief, and thrown off his jacket, and settled down to the enjoyment of a cigar and a brandy-and-soda, starts up from his recumbent posture, with a quickness for which no one would have given him credit, as a troubled servant rushes into the room and gives him the unwelcome news. And

young Walton and young Hill have thrown off their uniforms and are larking about the house in their shirt sleeves when the order comes for them to hurry back to the lines, and they buckle on their swords with a new sensation, and are soon galloping out of the compound side by side on their ponies.

But while there is all this commotion in the distant cantonment, a profound quiet reigns in many parts of the English quarter within the walls of the city itself. The news of even the approach of the mutineers has not yet reached the quiet corner in which stands the Rev. Mr. Wynn's bungalow. While Major Fane and Mr. Melvil were watching the first appearance of the mutinous column; while Mr. Melvil was driving furiously down to River Gate; while he was rushing away from it with the troopers after him; while he and Major Kent were vainly endeavouring to have the gate of the palace closed, and while the one was being slain and the other taken prisoner—Mr. Wynn was quietly teaching the class which he held every morning, gratuitously, for the sons of the poorer English folk of the neighbourhood, who would otherwise have had no education at all. The shadow of the overhanging city wall has been gradually getting less and less wide. The curly-tailed squirrels are running about under the low-branched mango-trees. The servants are busy with their several tasks. May Wynn is engaged in her usual household duties, now discharged with a more scrupulous care than ever. A greater sense of serenity and security, of peaceful and orderly quiet, could not have reigned around any gentleman's seat in England.

But to return to the mutineers, to the men the name of not one of whom appears on the pages of history, though this movement of theirs was to produce a new era in the history of India—in the history of the world. The news of their approach has flown up Star Street and brought a dense throng of people into the open space that lies between the beginning of that street and the palace. The usual loud murmur of a crowd hangs over

the throng. But when the head of the approaching column has reached the point where the road from River Gate enters the road leading from Star Street to the palace, to the Gate Magnificent, a sudden silence succeeds. Which way will the column turn—to the right towards Star Street, or to the left towards the gateway? When it wheels to the left there is a curious vibration through the crowd, a sudden expulsion of the hard-held breath, a breaking of the attitude of complete, absorbed attention. And then the officers at the head of the column wave their swords and shout, "*Nuwâb Sahib ki fatteh!*" ("Victory to the Nuwâb!"); and the cavalrymen, coming immediately behind them, shout, "*Fatteh Nuwâb Sahib ki!*" they being all Mohammedans; and the sepoy's further behind, who are chiefly Hindus, shout, "*Nuwâb Sahib ki jye!*" (meaning the same); and the crowd takes up the cry, and the shouts of "*Nuwâb Sahib ki jye!*" and "*Fatteh Nuwâb Sahib ki!*" vibrate through the air and strike against the lofty battlements, and any one hearing them might well think that the rule of the English was over for ever, and that of the Nuwâb established again. And now the hoofs of the horses clang on the iron bands and bolt-heads of the drawbridge. And now the head of the column has entered the Gate Magnificent; and now the whole of it has passed through. And as it disappears into the palace the on-gazers experience a curious sudden shock. Here is the beginning of new things! What may it forebode to them and theirs?

As the column enters through the Gate Magnificent, every window of the palace looking down on the wide enclosure immediately within that lordly gateway has its throng of people. In the balconies before them stand the children and their nurses, and the other female servants, bond and free; while from behind the jealous lattices are eagerly peering forth the wives and concubines of the Nuwâb and the princes his sons. From that lofty window, by the side of which lean those lofty ladders at which she glances with such a look of satisfaction, the Sikunder Begum, standing there by herself, is looking

eagerly down. In the front of the royal kitchens stand a throng of cooks and scullions, and footmen and table attendants, and pipe-fillers and water-coolers. In front of the royal stables stand a crowd of coachmen and horsebreakers, grass-cutters and grooms. Here in front of their quarters stand a body of the Nuwâb's troops, looking very fierce, and not withholding the remark that now that they have got the chance they will not fail to show what they are made of. The four officers in command of the rebels, as we should call them—patriots, champions of the faith, from another point of view—having halted their men, ride forward to the inner gate of the palace and demand interview of the Nuwâb.

The poor Nuwâb! The event that had set the blood flowing so fast in the veins of every one else had frozen it in his. While the Sikunder Begum was joyous and triumphant, he was most miserable and cast down. He had been so from the moment that the Sikunder Begum had sent him instant word of the appearance of the mutinous troops. And now the information that those pernicious men were under his very windows very nearly brought on that fit of illness which would have been so welcome. "Ay, Muhboob Ali," he had wailed to his confidential servant and friend, "what a word" (that is, "matter") "of astonishment it is that people are not content, however much they may have. They may have good food and good raiment, beautiful rooms and beautiful gardens, slaves and servants, splendid equipages and plenty of jewellery, magnificent jewellery, and yet not be content. Well is it written in the Koran, the exalted, that 'if a son of Adam have two valleys full of gold, yet will he desire a third one.'"

Muhboob Ali knew very well that this general remark had a particular application, that the son of Adam was in reality a daughter of Eve; the Nuwâb had the Sikunder Begum in his mind—the double reference to the jewellery left no doubt of that."

"It is the succession for her son she wants," says Muhboob Ali.

“Yes ; but by striving to gain that she may leave no throne to be succeeded to. By striving to gain what they have not, folks may lose what they have.”

The Nuwâb, a quiet, reflective man, a man with literary pretensions (the professional flatterers celebrated him a philosopher and a poet), a man of words rather than of actions, a platitudinarian, was fond of these little balanced sentences. They had become his mode of speech, and he was likely to use them at all times, even at such a time as this. But, apart from that, this set expression and the thought that gave rise to it had been familiar to him from his own experience during the last few years, in which the Sikunder Begum's efforts to enhance his power and privileges had led to their curtailment. It was also born of his character. *Quieta non movere* expressed the deepest feeling of his heart. He was very fond of quoting that saying of the Prophet, on whom be peace, “Haste is of the devil, and delay is of the All-giving.” He was a man of a gentle, timid, bookish, self-indulgent nature. In that speech about food and raiment, etc., he had indeed been referring to the Sikunder Begum, but it had also reflected his own feelings. He had everything that he wanted—his comfortable private rooms and his beautiful public halls, his airy bedchamber and his luxurious hummam ; his well-cooked meats and his well-cooled drinks ; his slipper-bearers, his pipe-lighters, and his fanners ; his cooks, his confectioners, and his pretty page-boys ; he had his gardens to walk in, and, what he liked still better, his ramparts to stroll along ; he had his well-filled zenana, in which he could enjoy the pleasure of the beginning and end of married life, its latest and its earliest—the deep devoted love for the old wife and the passionate love for the new—all at the same time. He had everything that he wanted ; and he did not desire to lose it. His intention was to keep himself personally as free from this present foolish movement as he could.

So when a message now arrives from the Sikunder Begum that the leaders of the mutineers wish to see him,

he takes refuge behind that court etiquette which he knows that the Begum herself would be the last to allow to be infringed, because it was significant of that dignity and power which she wished to be enhanced and not derogated from, and sends back word that he is about to engage in the important and lengthy ceremonial of the bath, and after that he will be occupied with that regal function, his breakfast, the chief meal of the day, and so will not be able to attend to any business for some time to come. And the Begum is well satisfied that he should take no part in the critical movements of to-day. She seems to direct them herself. She proceeds to the public audience hall, into which the four rebel leaders have been introduced. Many of those ranees and begums who have ruled kingdoms in India with such signal success have sat in the council-chamber with their faces uncovered; but they have held independent positions, been the actual rulers—acting as regents, or occupying the throne in their own person; the domestic life occupied a subordinate position to the public life. But the Sikunder Begum was not in this position. She was simply one of the Nuwâb's wives, a *purdah nashin* (a sitter behind the curtain). She cannot act in her own person; she must act, in a double sense, from behind the veil. And so she draws the chudder over her face as she enters the hall; but she can see clearly enough through the gossamer-like fabric, and she does not dispose the folds so that the beautiful outlines of her face may not be traced at all. After the exchange of the usual courtesies and the presentation of each of the men by name, and an explanation of their relative positions—the three men commanding the three regiments were yesterday the senior native officers in them, the man commanding the column was yesterday only a non-commissioned officer in the cavalry regiment, but he held high religious rank as a *suyud*, a descendant of the Prophet, and he was a bold energetic man, and in such times the command is to him who takes it—the Begum proceeds to address the individuals whose

actions of yesterday and last night were to have such portentous consequences, and whose names are now as unknown as those of the fishermen who by means of their dam, or of the cultivators who by means of their cut in the bank, have changed the course of a river, devastated a province, and produced a new era in its history.

His Highness, His Mightiness, the Sun of Prosperity, the Fountain of Honour, the Ocean of Wealth, the Nuwâb Sahib Bahâdur (exalted) is at present engaged in the function of the performance of his ablutions. He very much regrets that he is not able to receive them and congratulate them and issue his orders to them in person. But he has very fully conveyed his thoughts and wishes to her, and has given her complete authority to act at this present moment in his name. He approves most highly of the course they have taken. He applauds their courage. He extols their heroism. They have acted most nobly in throwing off the allegiance of the tyrants and oppressors who would have taken away their caste by such cruel and subtle means, in boldly taking up arms against them. His Highness is delighted that they should have come here, to Khizrabad, where it is now his intention to re-establish his authority at its fullest ancient height. When he has regained the power of bestowing titles and honours and wealth, he will not fail to remember those who have helped him to regain it. Great shall be their reward—the greater because of the further exertions they must now be called upon to put forth. They have performed a long journey, they must be very exhausted. And yet it is only now that they have arrived upon the scene of action. They must solidify their hearts for further efforts. If they seek rest now they will lose it for the future. To ensure their future success, to ensure their future rewards, to ensure their future security, they must not lay down their arms just yet. It is necessary to obtain immediate and full command of the city, and to overturn the authority of the Christian dogs and drive them out

of the place, or slay them, at once. Then will they bring the city people on their side. Immediate possession must be taken of all the city gates. There will be no difficulty in doing this, as the men on guard at them belong to the same regiment as the men who have just admitted them through the River Gate and the Gate Magnificent of the palace. Here is their senior native officer—pointing to Matadeen Panday, who has also come up into the hall—and he shall go with them. They must then obtain possession of the Arsenal. At the gate of this, too, is a guard of the same regiment; but there are six or seven Englishmen in it, and possibly some of their native establishment may stand by them, and it may not be possible to get in by the gate. In that case they must scale the wall, which has no ditch in front of it, and—praise be to Allah!—some ladders exactly suited for the purpose are standing ready in the palace now. And then they must obtain possession of the Government Treasury. As the Nuwâb Sahib has reasserted his full and complete sovereignty, all the money in that State Treasury now belongs to him; the Nuwâb Sahib has most particularly desired her to impress that upon them. The Treasury must not be allowed to be broken into, nothing must be taken out of it *by any one*. She lays great stress on the words. They must see to that. The Nuwâb Sahib lays that charge especially on them. He will take care that neither they nor their men shall be losers by it. If the evil-doers of the city are allowed to break into the Treasury they will leave nothing in it. And now let them march their warriors out into Star Street, and there let them have a short—only a short—rest by the side of the shady watercourse, which will supply them with water to wash with and drink, and food shall be brought them from the confectioners' shops. Then let them carry out the taking possession of the city and of the Arsenal and of the Treasury as quickly as may be. And as for the Christian dogs, let them be slain wherever they find them; let them all be slain—man, woman, and child.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE JUMOO GATE.

THE rebel leaders march the column out of the palace and then into Star Street, and the troopers dismount from their horses and the sepoy pile their arms by the side of the conduit which runs down the middle of it. While the men rest, and wash, and drink, and eat, the waters of insurrection are swiftly on the rise. The entry of the mutineers into the palace was as the opening of flood-gates. The cry has gone abroad that the *raj* (rule) of the English is over; the real, though not nominal, sovereignty of the English has passed away; the nominal sovereignty of the Nuwâb has become once more the real one. The commotion increases. Lawlessness grows more bold. The villainy of the place is on the stir. Sheitanpara begins to pour forth all its ruffianry. The cavalrymen had tasted of English blood at Abdoolapore the evening before—when they had made of that Sabbath eve a Witch's or Devil's Sabbath. Being informed that not very far off from where they are making their brief bivouac is the house and emporium of the Englishman who with his sons keeps the only "Europe shop" in the place, half a dozen of the troopers, accompanied by a crowd of roughs and ruffians, make for the place, and soon the unfortunate Englishman and the whole of his family, eight souls in all, have been slain. The destruction of whole English families was one of the terrible features of that terrible time. Many a child in

England was suddenly to find itself fatherless, motherless, sisterless, brotherless, all at once—the sole survivor of a once large family circle. The dwelling-place and the shop are gutted, and afford splendid plunder. The game of murder and pillage has begun. The ruffians are soon warming to their work. The houses of other Europeans are attacked. Fear is withdrawing its restraint. The amusement is beginning to be considered safe. The wild-beast madness is coming on. The cry of “Kill the —— Feringhee!”—the blank space being filled up with many an opprobrious epithet, many a foul term of abuse—is rapidly becoming more frequent and more full. Louder and louder grows the tumult. The conflagration is beginning to roar.

There is one man in the city who looks down upon this tumult, and has the noise of it in his ears, and yet pursues the usual daily round of his duties undisturbed—the man who strikes the hours on the great historical gong above the main gateway of the palace, as the members of his family have done for many generations back, ever since that great disc of sonorous metal was swung on to its great tripod two centuries and a half ago. He raises the mallet and delivers the stroke, as little disturbed by what is going on below as would be the hammer of a clock, of which he is the human representative. He, uncaring, notes the passage of the hours which to so many are to be their last ones on the earth. He, untroubled, numbers out the hours to those whose hours are numbered. While that English family is being murdered below, he is delivering the needful ten strokes on the gong. The rustics in the neighbouring villages, who have ample leisure to note the idle passing hours, having nothing to employ them until the heavy deluge of “the rains” shall come and soften the iron-bound earth, and enable them to drive their light ploughshares through it, say to one another, “It is striking ten o’clock;” but the sound passes unheeded over the din-filled streets immediately below.

The natives of India are great walkers, and their calf-

less legs carry their light bodies over very long distances. But still the sepoys, having once seated themselves, are inclined to linger in the shade of the trees and by the margin of the water. The Soubahdar Matadeen Panday is, however, very urgent with the leader of the mutineers for an immediate move on the Jumoo Gate ; it is so needful to secure it at once. It stands on the main line of communication with the cantonment. If the sepoys cannot be induced to move, why not send some of the troopers ? All that is needed is for them to get to the gate ; the guard itself, men of his own regiment, will secure it for them. The leader of the insurgents, bold and active, determined to make his enterprise successful, says "Certainly," and he will go himself. He is soon moving down Star Street with a squadron of his men.

While he is approaching the Jumoo Gate from within, one of the regiments from the cantonment is approaching it from without. It was the 66th, the one commanded by Colonel Barnes, and to which the Soubahdar Rustum Khan, the Sikunder Begum's present paramour-in-chief, belongs.

We must go back to the time when the Brigadier had received the first intimation of the approach of the mutineers. "They are now probably about four miles off," Mr. Melvil had written. "They must be kept from crossing the bridge, from entering the city ; they may create a disturbance there." The Brigadier orders out all the troops. His aide-de-camp is soon galloping about, his orderlies are soon flying hither and thither. Officers of all ranks are soon galloping along all the roads, as you might have seen them galloping three-quarters of an hour before ; but this time they are galloping towards the infantry and artillery lines, and not away from them. The lines of the three sepoy regiments covered a large space of ground—the sepoys live in separate huts and not together in one barrack like our men. The Grenadiers occupied the lines farthest from the town, the 66th the lines nearest to it. This had a bearing on the events of the day. The Brigadier would rather have sent the

Grenadiers, as being the best regiment and commanded by the best officer, down to the scene of action. (He, and those about him, had formed the opinion that the mutineers must simply be trying to escape from an English force behind them; that they were making for the bridge under Khizrabad simply in order to get as soon as possible out of the English-ruled Doâb into the foreign territory beyond Khizrabad; that they must be a disorganized rabble whom one regiment and a couple of guns would be sufficient to check; that the only danger to be apprehended was that of their getting into the city and producing a disturbance, a "*bazaar émeute*," as the Brigadier called it, there.) But as the Grenadiers' lines are the farthest off, and time is now the most important element in the matter—the only important element the Brigadier and those about him think—he determines to send the nearest regiment, which is the 66th. Colonel Barnes is ordered to march quickly down and prevent the mutineers from crossing the bridge of boats—at all events, prevent them from entering the city. He is to be accompanied by a couple of guns. But as there is some delay in the arrival of these—the sepoys were ready at once, because they had not taken off their uniforms—the Brigadier directs Barnes to leave two companies to follow with the guns, and push on at once with the remaining six companies, which he does. The regiment has first to traverse a side road along which there are no trees and on which the sun, the only enemy some of the English officers think they have to dread, is beating fiercely down, and across which the hot wind has begun to blow, raising up clouds of dust. At any other time Tommy Walton and Loo Hill would not have liked trudging it through that hot, blinding sand. But they do not mind it now. They are too full of excitement. They may have a chance of taking share in a bit of fighting, of smelling gunpowder for the first time. And so they step out cheerily, cheek by jowl with their dusky men.

And now they have entered on the carefully watered

Mall, with its double avenue of trees casting their coolness into the air, and it is pretty comfortable here, even though it is near ten o'clock. And now they are descending the long slope leading down from the ridge, now traversing the plain lying between it and the city walls, still, of course, along the pleasant shady Mall. They have reached the Jumoo Gate. They are crossing the long drawbridge. They have passed through the outer gate. They have entered the wide enclosure where William Hay has his men turned out and under arms. And now they have passed through the inner gateway—the inner and outer gates were both wide open as usual—into the street beyond. Colonel Barnes and all the mounted officers are riding carelessly together at the head of the regiment, as if they were on an ordinary march. They have still the width of the city to traverse before they arrive on the scene of operations. The street, or more properly road, they have entered on soon begins to have other roads running out of it or crossing it. Two main ones leave it a short way beyond the Jumoo Gate. The first one runs off to the left into the English quarter; the other one runs off to the right, a little farther on, and leads into the heart of the city, to Star Street. Now, as the six companies of the 66th are approaching the head of this road from the Jumoo Gate, the rebel leader with his squadron of cavalry is approaching it from Star Street. But both roads have thick avenues of trees along their sides, and the angle between them is filled up by the grounds of the mansion of a Mohammedan noble, thickly planted with trees and surrounded by a high brick wall. The two parties are therefore not aware of one another's close vicinity. The mounted English officers are riding carelessly together at the head of the regiment. They think the scene of action is still far off. The men are marching with sloped arms. The muskets are not loaded. Colonel Barnes stated afterwards, in his official report, that he had led the men into the city “with unloaded muskets because he anticipated nothing more than a bazaar riot, which he could quell by the

use of the bayonet alone." As the head of the regiment comes within about a hundred yards of the corner, the front rank of the cavalry squadron enters the same road, and wheeling to the left, towards the Jumoo Gate, the troopers and the sepoy find themselves face to face; and they continue to advance towards one another, for the sepoy cannot halt without the word of command, and in the first moments of stupefaction and surprise Colonel Barnes cannot give it—he is so taken aback; he had thought these men were on the other side of the river. And the troopers cannot halt, for they are pushed on by the men coming round the corner, who do not know what is ahead of them. Then Colonel Barnes shouts out "Halt!" and gives the order to load. The first order is obeyed, but not the second. The leader of the mutineers hails this joyously. He has not had time to note which regiment this is. He was afraid it might be the Grenadiers. "*Bhai-bund!*" ("Bond-Brethren!") he shouts.

"*Bhai-bund!*" shouts the Soubahdar Rustum Khan from the head of the regiment.

And then from the troopers comes the shout of "*Mar Feringhee sala ko!*" ("Slay the Feringhee brothers-in-law!") And they dash forward at the English officers on horseback and shoot them down with their carbines and pistols; those on foot are bayoneted by their own men. Soon all is over. Four only of the English officers who were with their regiment that day escaped with their lives. All were not killed on the spot; some made a run for it, back towards the Jumoo Gate or down some of the side roads and lanes; but the troopers were after them, and had the speed of them, and most of them were overtaken and slain. Two of them, however, managed to escape by leaping over walls, and two of those left for dead on the road survived their wounds. Eight bodies lay together not far from that corner of fatal meeting. And now there are yells and shouts of triumph, and the two bodies of mutineers exchange boisterous and boastful greetings. The Soubahdar Rustum Khan has seized and

mounted poor old Barnes's splendid weight-carrying charger and assumed the command of his regiment.

He and his co-religionist, the leader from Abdoolapore, exchange a brief greeting. "We have come to seize the Jumoo Gate," says the latter. "We have only to enter it," says the former, pointing his sword towards the open portal, which is full in view.

The men, the sepoy, go right about face, and Rustum Khan leads them towards the gateway, waving his sword, and the troopers come following after. The sepoy have passed over a good portion of the distance, when the pleasing void of the gateway is disagreeably obstructed by the tall form of an English officer, by the black muzzles of a couple of guns, by the side of which stand two gunners with blazing port-fires in their hands. The sepoy come to a sudden halt. Rustum Khan waves his sword and calls on them to charge. But the movement is now the other way. The men recoil, and recoil, and recoil still more, and still farther back. If they keep to that road, which runs in a direct line with the gateway for a long distance, the disagreeable fear of those guns will be on them for a very great while. And so when they reach the corner of the road leading towards Star Street, that along which the troopers have come, they rush into it, and will not halt until they have got a good way down it. And then news is brought to Rustum Khan that the guns are no longer pointing down the road, because the massive gate has been closed. "How frightened they are of cannon!" says Rustum Khan to the leader of the rebel force from Abdoolapore. "The guns could only have been discharged once. Only a few men would have been killed, and we should have been in the gateway. Now we have lost our chance. We can do nothing here without guns. We must now proceed to supply ourselves with them from the Arsenal. We shall have difficulty in gaining the day over the English so long as they have guns and we have none. It is a great affliction to have missed this splendid chance of seizing this gateway. But still it is a great thing to have got almost the whole

of the regiment on our side at once ; the remaining two companies will be more a source of weakness than of strength to the English. So will the 76th, now that so many of them have joined you—more especially the Soubahdar Major, Matadeen Panday. The English have only the Grenadiers and their guns to depend on now. We must make for the Arsenal at once.”

As this major portion—it is thought to be the whole—of one of the three local regiments marches into Star Street in company with the troopers, whose gray jackets are now the symbol of mutiny—as the news of its defection from the English cause, and of the slaughter of its English officers, which has set on that defection the seal of blood, made it an irrevocable step, flies around, the commotion in that main central thoroughfare becomes greater than ever. Now do peace and order take their final flight, not to return for many a day. Now does lawlessness begin to reign supreme. Now does the Devil’s Quarter empty itself. Now do its most crime-laden inhabitants emerge from their secret hiding-places. The sons of Belial issue forth. Now do the butchers, the men of blood, ever foremost in deeds of violence, leave their slaughter-houses to take part in another kind of shambles. There begin to be incursions into the English quarter ; the dwelling-place of the ruling race is losing its sanctity. The roughs and ruffians of the bazaars lying within or along the borders of this quarter begin to gather together ready for mischief. They have begun to rob and are ready to murder.

A native Christian bugler had carried the news of what was happening at the corner back to the Jumoo Gate. Hay had called on his men to hasten to the help of the officers of the 66th, but they had refused to move. Then the two other companies of the 66th, with the two guns, reached the gateway. It is an awkward situation for the English officers—two companies of the very regiment that had just attacked its officers, and Hay’s fifty men who had just refused to obey his orders. But the officer in charge of the guns is a man of prompt

action, and he knows that he can depend on his own artillerymen, natives though they be. And so he loads his two pieces and points them through the gateway ; and that having caused the rebellious regiment to retire, he promptly turns their muzzles inwards, facing the two companies of the same corps within, so as to check any inclination they might have had to help their brethren or to rush after them ; and then he gets his artillerymen to close the massive gates. This done, he sends up information of what has happened to the Brigadier.

The Brigadier's feelings on receiving that information may easily be conceived. The defection of the 66th quite changes the situation. It gives the preponderance of strength to the enemy. The 76th was weakened by having to furnish the city and palace guards ; it was, besides, unreliable—had been in a disaffected condition for some years back. The Grenadiers and the battery of artillery are all he has to rely upon now. And with this force he has to make head against the mutineers, now four regiments strong ; ensure the safety of the huge city ; guard the widespread cantonment. And on his shoulders was laid the heavy burden, the weight of which was so terribly felt at the coming siege of Cawnpore, with its tragical ending ; at the siege of Lucknow, with its brighter termination—the burden of the care for the lives of a great number of helpless women and children. And apart from the terrible local consequences that might ensue from it, of which this slaying of the officers by the 66th was a foretaste, the mere fact of the mutiny of these three regiments at Abdoolapore, of this regiment in his own command, was almost enough to overwhelm the old man, the pride, the joy, the honourable traditions of whose life had all been bound up with the sepoy army. (The great blow that the mutiny of the Bengal Army inflicted on the feelings of the English officers belonging to it has never been sufficiently appreciated or sympathized with, as the mutiny was held to be in some sort their own fault.) Moreover, this sudden and unexpected defection of one of the oldest regiments in the Company's

army, which had always rendered the Company most excellent and faithful service, brings on him this great fear: Are even the Grenadiers, are even the native artillerymen, to be trusted? That is the worst of an alien and mercenary army: you never know at what moment it may fail you. It is a thing apart from yourself. We English people have to pursue our imperial course, but it is as well to bear in mind that our ultimate dependence must be on the men of our own race. It is best to be on one's own legs; but if you are on horseback you must ride. However sore the old man's feelings, however troubled his thoughts, he has now to act. It is obvious that the Jumoo Gate must be secured. The possession of that may keep the city in awe. It bars the straight road from the city to the cantonment. He orders Colonel Grey to proceed at once with half his regiment and a couple of guns to the gateway, which is now in such imminent peril of being lost. (This is to be the last forward movement of the English.) He himself then marches down with the remaining portions of the two regiments, the Grenadiers and the 76th, and the remaining two guns, to the ridge, and posts himself on it by the side of the Flagstaff Tower. He thus has command of both the roads leading down to the cantonment from the city.

And soon by the side of the Flagstaff Tower are crowded together all those buggies and barouches and palanquin carriages which were to be seen moving up and down the Mall in the early morning or late evening, or gathered together round the bandstand. And in these vehicles, which afford hardly any shelter from the sun—none from the fiery dust-laden blast—the delicately-nurtured women who have hurried out from the innermost recesses of carefully cooled and darkened houses have to pass the rest of the day. In them they sit solitary or in the midst of a closely-packed crowd of little children, whose sufferings from the heat and glare and the want of their usual comforts add so greatly to their own. Those sufferings become very great in the terrible midday and

early afternoon hours. And the women are weighed upon by a great fear for the safety of the lives of their husbands, their children, and themselves—a fear that goes on increasing as from the city outspread before them, and from the midst of the English quarter, rise up columns of smoke, and the news of the murder of the English shopkeeper and his family reaches the spot and spreads among them. Their hearts might have sunk utterly within them, had they not been buoyed up by one hope, by a continually increasing hope—a hope which increased the more it was disappointed—the hope that the pursuing English force from Abdoolapore must now be near at hand, its continually delayed arrival only showing that its arrival could not longer be delayed.

When Colonel Grey passes into the enclosure at the Jumoo Gateway, with his entirely reliable men, the balance of power there is once more in favour of the English. But he cannot move to any distance beyond it, lest the gates should be closed behind him; nor has he orders to do so. But there is now no enemy near, and the bodies of the murdered officers are lying not far off. So he sends out a party to bring them in. They are brought in, lying side by side at the bottom of a long Government wagon, and covered with some ladies' dresses which had been found lying about in the road. And when they are taken out it is found that Colonel Barnes, though desperately wounded, is not dead, and Colonel Grey has him forwarded immediately in a litter to the cantonment. The bodies of the other poor fellows, of those who had passed through the gateway so shortly before, in the first flush of their youth, in the full strength of their manhood, are laid side by side, a ghastly row, in the shadow of one of the walls, and again covered over with the women's dresses. And William Hay, passing the spot shortly afterwards, is horror-stricken as he recognizes the dresses as belonging to Beatrice and Lilian Fane and their mother.

Their house has been sacked then. What has become of them?

We have now narrated the general events of the day, so far as was needful for our purpose. Henceforward we have only to follow the fortunes of those English girls, the events in whose lives during these eight momentous days were to form the thread of our narrative, and serve to give it a limit and some sort of roundness.

CHAPTER XX.

MISS LYSTER'S SECRET.

MRS. FANE and her daughters have bathed and breakfasted. They are reading quietly in the drawing-room. A profound silence reigns in the darkened apartment. No sound from the outer world penetrates into it. Lilian has allowed her book to drop into her lap ; she is not musing over what she has read—she never does muse—but she is thinking that she has to give young Walton his final answer to-day. Of course she has made up her mind to refuse him ; such a boy and girl engagement would be too ridiculous, too absurd. It would be the joke of the whole station. What a ludicrous, what an inferior position should she occupy in comparison with her sister and May Wynn ! No, she must make an engagement such as theirs, as good as theirs ; and she did not care to wait four or five years—she would be quite an old young woman by then. She wanted to enter on the dignity and delights of married life as soon as she could. It would be a triumph to marry immediately after she had come out. And, best reason of all, she did not—did not care for him—in that way. She could not at his age. She was sorry for him—he really was a very nice lad. She wished she had refused him at once.

The sisters are seated close together in order to make the most of the single ray of light allowed to enter the room. How daintily fresh and fair they look in their

pretty new-washed dresses ! The old bearer now enters the room ; they are too absorbed in their reading and thinking to observe his hurried, instead of his usual calm, dignified walk—the troubled look on his face in place of the usual serene, self-satisfied one. Mrs. Fane, leaning back in her chair, puts out her hand towards the silver salver, without looking up at him, and seeing that the note is in her husband's handwriting, takes it up indifferently. Lucius has probably forgotten something—wants something to be sent to him. She opens it carelessly between her forefinger and thumb as she continues to lean back in her chair. Then she sits up.

“Mutinous sepoys from Abdoolapore—got into the city—may be a disturbance,” she cries in an agitated tone of voice. She is a woman of a strong, firm spirit ; but this news has come on her very suddenly. Major Fane had written two missives to his wife that morning. When he and Mr. Melvil had parted, after the first sight of the mutineers, he had written a note to the Brigadier to inform him of the fact, and another to his wife informing her of it too. “Sepoy regiments at Abdoolapore have mutinied and come here ; but they will not be able to get into the city, so do not let yourself be troubled,” was the purport of the first one. By some misconception both the notes had been taken up to the Brigadier's quarters, and so Mrs. Fane had not yet received hers. The second was, as it were, a continuation of the first one : “The mutineers have somehow got into the city ; there may be a disturbance ; you and the girls had better go over to Hay at the Jumoo Gate. Do this at once.”

“Mutineers!—in the city !” cries Beatrice ; and she thinks of Hay at the Jumoo Gate.

“Mutineers !” cries Lilian, merely re-echoing the word ; she has not yet disengaged her thoughts from her own affairs.

“You had better go over to Hay Sahib at the Jumoo Gate, madam,” says the old bearer. (He is the sirdar, or head bearer, as you can tell by his dignified look and bearing.)

"How do you know what is in the note?" asks Mrs. Fane, glancing up at him with surprise.

"I did not know. Is that what the Major Sahib has written? You had better go there at once."

"Yes," says Mrs. Fane, turning to her daughters, "that is what your father has written—that we should go over to the Jumoo Gate—to William——"

"Shall I order the carriage, madam?"

Then the ayah comes in with hurried but still silent footsteps, because of her naked feet; and then in an agitated voice, but still with that air of delight and satisfaction which accompanies the conveyance of disagreeable or troublesome news, especially on the part of those to whom, from their lowly station, the temporary superiority is welcome, says to her mistress,—

"The men of the *Lind-ki-pultun*" (Lind's Regiment—the 66th was so called after the officer who had raised it ninety years before) "have murdered all their officers——"

"Murdered all their officers! The men of the 66th!" cries Mrs. Fane in a tone of horror, and now rising from her seat.

"And their bodies are lying in the road near the Jumoo Gate."

"What?" cries Mrs. Fane.

"All their dead bodies are lying in the open road near the Jumoo Gate."

The girls are dumb with horror.

"*Heera Lal!*" whispers a man at the doorway. He is the sweeper, the man of lowest caste, whose touch would be pollution to any other servant in the house. He dare not raise his voice or set his foot within the room, even at such a time as this.

"What is it?" says the bearer.

"A crowd of people from the bazaar are plundering Ismith" (Smith) "Sahib's house."

Mr. Smith was a clerk in one of the offices, who lived a little way off.

"Plundering Mr. Smith's house!" exclaims Mrs. Fane.

"Tell them to get the carriage ready," cries the bearer.—

"Madam, you and the young ladies had better get ready at once. There is no time to be lost."

Mrs. Fane stands for a moment bewildered. It is so unexpected, so astonishing. *They* have to fly from their home; *they* of the ruling race, who have dwelt in such high security, to whose persons and property a peculiar sanctity has attached! She have to fly her house in the broad light of day! To have to fear and fly—she! It is a terrible shock to her pride. A bitter feeling of humiliation and degradation passes over her. To have to run before a mob of natives! But no time is to be allowed her for indulgence in feelings of any kind. As they pass from the drawing-room into the adjoining dining-room, in order to reach their bedrooms and get ready to go out, Mrs. Fane begins to think of what she shall do with regard to the safe custody of the house—whether she had not better take some of their valuables with them; but no time is to be allowed her for thinking either. Some servants now come rushing in and shout out, "They are coming! They are coming! They are nearing the front gate!" The time for moving quietly and speaking with bated breath, as Mrs. Fane's servants had been so specially trained to do, has gone by.

"Then they cannot get away in the carriage?" says the old bearer.

"No; the people will soon be at the gate."

"You must get out by the back way; you must go on foot, madam."

"On foot—in the sun—at this hour of the day?"

"Quick, madam, quick—get your headgear quickly, in the name of God!"

They rush into their bedrooms and come out quickly with their hats. They push aside the side-flap of one of the heavy grass screens or mattresses attached to the western doors of the dining-room, and pass through it. They hurry across the veranda—that west veranda in which they had sat so joyfully, so securely, but a few hours before. Passing out from the cool, dark, silent house so suddenly, how terrible to their frames is the shock of

the heat, how terrible to their eyes the shock of the dazzling sunshine, how terrible to their ears the shock of the shrill yelling of the crowd, how terrible this insecurity after the security, this disquiet after the quiet, of a few, only a few, minutes before ! They pass into the garden, the space enclosed by a brick wall, which, as is usual in the East, is orchard, flower garden, and little park all in one. They can now move along hidden from the view of the crowd.

Getting to the far end of the garden, they pass out through a wicket into a narrow lane which runs along the compound on that side. It is on the opposite side of the compound from the Jumoo Gate, and so they must make for the latter by a roundabout way ; but it cannot be helped ; they could not have got into the road which led to it straight. The lane lies quiet and still, filled only with the fierce hot sunshine. But as they advance along it the sound of a tumult of some kind grows stronger and stronger in their ears—they are approaching it, or it is approaching them, or both. If it proceeds from a crowd in the lane, what are they to do ? They may overtake it, must meet it. For some distance the lane runs between brick walls. But now they arrive at the extensive well-wooded grounds which surround the Government College (for native youth), and which are bounded here by a hedge. They may be able to get through this if need be. The old bearer goes up to an opening in it and looks through. He draws back with a loud exclamation,—

“ It is here,” he cries, “ the noise, the tumult—at the College. The seekers after knowledge ” (students) “ are plundering it. Look ! ”

Mrs. Fane goes up to the narrow gap and looks through. It is a curious sight. From the handsome front of the building—it was one of the chief educational establishments in the province—to the handsome main gateway directly facing it, extends a crowd of lads and boys and men moving off laden with the plunder of their *alma mater*. The noise does not come from them so much

as from those within the building. Having secured their plunder, those outside are only eager to get away with it as soon as they can, and do not waste their breath in much yelling or shouting. It is a curious sight, the more curious when you come to consider that a couple of hours ago these boys and lads and young men were standing in rows on naked feet, or squatted comfortably in circles on the floor, or seated uncomfortably in lines on the alien benches, in all the strict subjection of school discipline. Here are lads running away with forms ; here are lads running away with valuable books from the library ; here are two lads walking away with the celestial globe, and two others conveying the terrestrial one. That tall man, whose flowing snowy-white garments show in this bright glare like the shining robes of an angel of light, is the Persian professor, who has promptly seized the occasion—being quite convinced that the English rule is over, once for all and for ever—to make himself possessor of some very valuable copies of the works he was employed to teach. Mrs. Fane does not indulge in these reflections. Her only thought is that they have nothing to fear in moving down the lane. And they do move down the whole length of it—it is a very long one—without meeting a single soul. It opens into a metalled or main road, which leads to the Jumoo Gate, now no great distance off. But they have not gone a dozen yards that way when the bearer calls out that the crowd of men they can see in the distance is moving towards them ; they must retrace their steps. What are they to do ? If they have seen the crowd, the crowd has also most probably seen them ; in fact, the sound of a sudden shout or yell seems to proclaim that it has. What are they to do ? They must keep together ; but they are as conspicuous here as a group of Orientals would be in the streets of an English city. If they turn back along the lane the crowd may not pursue them down it—it may pass on along the road ; but, on the other hand, it may pursue them down it, and then they will be completely cut off from the Jumoo Gate, will be

driven away from it and back again to the house. They cannot escape from the mob along the open roads, if it once sets up the chase of them. Their only chance of escape would lie in separating and going different ways ; but there is a horror in the mere thought of that—more especially to the mother.

“ You must get off the road as soon as you can. You had better take refuge for a little while in the house of Mrs. Lyster. It is not very far off ; you can remain there until the crowd has passed by, and then make again for the Jumoo Gate. The house is a safe one,” cries the old bearer.

As the reader remembers, Mrs. Lyster is the “ mysterious mother ” of Miss Lyster.

They hasten towards the house. The bearer’s remark that it is a safe one refers to a certain peculiarity in its arrangements. The building was, as it were, a cross between the ordinary bungalow of the Europeans and the dwelling-places of the better classes of natives. The latter are built entirely with a view to privacy and safety ; they consist simply of verandas and rooms, lower and upper, surrounding a central courtyard, access to which is obtained by means of one single gateway only. The former is a thatch-roofed house, with numerous doorways, standing in the midst of grounds, the compound surrounded by a hedge or low brick wall which men would have little difficulty in getting over, just as they would have little difficulty in climbing over or bursting open the flimsy gate or gates. The enclosure of Mrs. Lyster’s house was much larger than a courtyard, much smaller than a compound. The dwelling-place was built across one of the shorter sides of the parallelogram of the enclosure, and the servants’ houses ran across the opposite end. Along one of the longer sides, and not far from the house, stood some store-rooms, the rest of that side consisting of a high brick wall ; and the side parallel to this one was formed by a similar high brick wall, its run broken only by the gateway in the middle of it : when this gate was closed the house and enclosure were

safely cut off from the outer world. In the middle of the enclosure was a flower garden ; along its edges and in front of the servants' houses were some fine large trees. When the fugitives arrive at the gate they find the servants just about to close it, and as they pass in it is closed behind them. When they reach the entrance veranda of the house, the old bearer seated there, after the usual fashion, as an English footman sits in the hall, looks at them in a very curious way ; it is of course a most extraordinary thing that they should come at that hour of the day and in that manner—on foot ; but there is something more in his face than that.

The standing order is "*Durwaza bund*" ("Not at home ;" literally, "Doors shut"), he says, and he does not know if the young lady can see them.

"Of course she will admit them under the circumstances. They cannot go away," says Mrs. Fane.

"Well, I will go and see," says the old man, still looking at them in that curious sort of way. Nor does he usher them into any cool inner room, but leaves them standing there in the fiery hot veranda—leaves them, in fact, just outside the door of the drawing-room, whose position Mrs. Fane knows, for she had made some formal visits before, and on one occasion had been admitted. (This was a year or so before ; now, as the bearer said, the formula of "Not at home" was always used.) As they stand there, very hot and drenched through to the skin, but with their composure restored by the shutting of the gate, they hear the sound of music and singing in this adjoining room. They know the voice and the playing of Miss Lyster herself ; she sings and plays remarkably well ; but it is not she. This is a fitful, varied, broken, discontinuous kind of singing and playing ; now a passage out of an opera, now a bit out of a song—"Of all the girls that I love best, Is Sally in our ally !" It is a strange voice, sweet but broken. Then comes a sudden silence. Their presence is being announced. Then a sudden shrill laugh. Then comes a sudden bustle, such as often attends the arrival of visitors at an

unusual, unexpected hour—a curious, giggling laugh—the slamming of doors. They have to wait some time before the servant comes back and says that Miss Lyster will see them, and admits them into an anteroom, and then into the drawing-room. The girls, who have never been in it before, look around the apartment with startled eyes, the more so because of the poor appearance (from the outside) of the house, which they had always heard spoken of as one that would not ordinarily have been occupied by people of their own and Miss Lyster's class. Their own drawing-room is pretty; that of Mr. Melvil very splendid. But here is a rare and perfect combination of splendour and beauty. There was here none of the superficial, finicking, overloaded, bewildering prettiness of the ordinary feminine drawing-room, overcrammed with things. There was here a perfect excellence—the repose, the dignity, the combination of simplicity and splendour, due to having but a few things, each one good of its kind. Each piece of furniture was of beautifully carved mahogany, dark with age; on the floor was a superb Persian carpet, a rare work of art; there were some splendid china vases, some of the beautiful ones Wedgwood had then begun to make; on the walls some beautiful pictures from the pencils of George Beechey and Zoffany; and over it all hung the mellowing tint of age. Had they been in a frame of mind to make any such comparisons, they would have thought how well Miss Lyster with her lofty look and carriage—graceful, refined, and faded—seems to suit the room she now enters with her smooth gliding walk.

“I am very sorry that you should have had to wait so long in the veranda,” she says in her sweet and gentle but sad-toned voice. “I did not hear the carriage.”

“We came on foot,” says Mrs. Fane.

“Came on foot! At this hour of the day! I see you do look very dusty and—and—hot” (“wet” was the word she had nearly used). “But why?”

“Have you not heard? The sepoy regiments at Abdoolapore have mutinied and come here, and have

got into the city, and there is a great disturbance, and the people are going about plundering the houses of the Europeans ; and they have plundered the house of Mr. Smith, the man who lives not far from us, and were coming to ours, and we had to rush out from it, and we were making for the Jumoo Gate when we saw a crowd of people—— There they are ! ”

The sound of a great yelling and shouting penetrates into the room, even though the screens of split bamboos are all down and the doors all closed.

“ I hope your gate is a strong one ? ”

“ Yes, a very strong one.”

The sound has ceased ; it is not renewed. Miss Lyster goes to the door leading into the veranda, and, opening it, asks one of the servants the meaning of the noise.

“ A crowd of people stopped at the gate and shouted, but they have passed on.”

“ No, I had not heard,” says Miss Lyster. This was so, because the servants whom Mrs. Fane and her daughters had found shutting the gate had only just returned from a neighbouring bazaar, and having heard there what was happening, and seeing the crowd on the road, had thought it prudent to close the gate the moment they had reached it.

“ If the road is now clear I think we had better go on to the Jumoo Gate at once,” says Mrs. Fane. “ My husband wrote to me to go there, so as to be with William Hay. Why not you come with us too, Miss Lyster—you and your mother ? ”

“ We could not go with you. We are quite safe here. Our gate is very strong.”

“ Yes, but you are here all by yourselves. The gate is not so strong but that it could be burst open by a crowd.”

There is a look of trouble on Miss Lyster’s quiet, if grief-worn face.

“ My mother could not go.”

“ Why not ? Is she such an invalid ? Cannot she move about ? ”

"Oh yes, but——"

"It is such a little way. She could go in your carriage."

"She *would* not. I hope it may not be necessary. I do not know what we should do then." She speaks with a most unwonted agitation of manner.

"Hy—eh! Hy—eh! Ho—oh!" It is impossible to express in writing the sound that once more comes through the closed doors into the room. Then comes a loud reverberation, the sound of rattling: the gate is being struck with something heavy—shaken. And then, in the midst of it, from an adjoining apartment comes into the room the sound of the same sweet cracked voice singing a merry lilt,—

"Upon the sands at Margate,
As gaily we did ride,
Trab—trab——"

And then some of the house servants come rushing into the room, a heavier wave of sound following them as they throw open the door—the khansaman, the major-domo, the head servant of the establishment, rushes in without his cummerbund round his waist, without his turban on his head, breaches of domestic decorum and discipline of which he would not have been guilty except under the most extraordinary circumstances—and shout out, "A great crowd of people are at the gate, and are trying to burst it in. They must burst it in. They have hammers and hatchets with them. You must hide yourselves—hide yourselves."

"They cannot hide themselves here," says the old khansaman, striving to tie together the little bits of string which answer the purpose of buttons on his long coat, which he has only just thrown on. "The evil-doers will of course burst into every room. You must come and hide in one of our houses, Miss Baba," addressing Miss Lyster.

"Oh, this is terrible!" cries Miss Lyster, wringing her hands.

Even at that moment of terrible agitation for herself—

terrible because she had her two beautiful young daughters (what a bane their beauty might prove now !) by her side, and the roar of a mob of ruffians at the only gateway of the house in her ears—Mrs. Fane experiences a feeling of surprise at this great agitation so openly displayed on the part of one who was usually so calm and quiet and self-possessed, serenely self-possessed.

“ My mother has not left the house for years,” says Miss Lyster, turning to Mrs. Fane.

“ But you said she was not an invalid. She is not bedridden ? ”

“ Oh no, she is not ; it is a fancy. First she used to walk about in the compound—we chose this house because when the gate is closed the compound is so private—but for the past three years she has not set foot out of the house. After my father’s death she said she could not bear to look on an English face again, and for all these years she has not seen any one—not even the doctor—seen no white face but my own, spoken English only with me.”

Incidents press ; but it was strange to note how even at such a moment as this the past overbore the present with the poor young lady. Mrs. Fane knew that Colonel Lyster, a very popular, rising man, had been killed by a fall from his horse.

“ But for the last three or four years she has had the idea—the fancy—that if she were to leave the house the sky would fall upon her. I have not been able to persuade her to go out of the house. She will not do so now.”

“ You know, Rumzan Khan,” turning to the khansaman, an old and faithful servant of the house, “ that the Mem Sahib will not set foot out of doors.”

“ If she does not set foot out of the house now, she will never set foot out of it again,” says the old man. He is not taking advantage of the situation ; he does not mean to be rude or to distress her ; he is simply stating what he believes to be a fact—and such plain statement of facts, without regard to feelings, is common among the coarser orders all the world over, more especially in India.

"He is now almost an idiot," a loving and affectionate son will say of his father, while the old man stands by in smiling acquiescence.

The bamboo screen before the door of an inner apartment is lifted, and the subject of the conversation enters the room. She looks like a walking picture, like an embodied vision of the past. Very full skirts, and very long waists, with a very long pointed peak in front and tight sleeves, were the fashion of the day. The fashion of some fifteen years before had been the reverse of this : the waist higher up, with simply a band or sash round it, sleeves full at the shoulder, skirts not hooped out, but fitting closer and flowing more freely—a style of dress very well adapted for gay and frolic youth, mirthful dancing girlhood, for which period of life it was now exclusively reserved. And so it was very startling to see a gray-haired old lady appear in this dress ; doubly startling as not in accord with the fashion of the time, as not in accord with her time of life. But, though strange, it was not in any way ridiculous or absurd. Beauty has an overruling power and can make any dress appropriate : and this old lady has a most beautiful face and figure. Her face has a childish beauty, her figure a girlish lightness and uprightness which fit them for the dress. She looks like a beautiful vision of the past revived. And as Miss Lyster says, " Mrs. Fane and her daughters, mamma " (" mother " was not in fashion in her infancy), the old lady shakes hands with them with the winning sweetness of manner that has descended to her daughter. But as Mrs. Fane observes the peculiar, childish, unsteady look in the eyes, the infantile smile on the lips, and then the somewhat over-elaborate toilet for the time of day, the too many bows and ribbons, the too much jewellery, the over-elaborate dressing of the hair, done in the evening fashion of a bygone time, strikes her more forcibly, and the secret of the house flashes upon her—the old lady is of weak intellect. Mrs. Fane for the next few minutes (remember how much more quickly thoughts and occurrences pass than they can be

recorded) lives in an exaggerated form that dual existence which is so common to us all. Her mind is entirely occupied with the thought of the danger to her daughters, and yet it works mechanically, like a machine into which something is thrown, on this new fact: this then is the secret of the mysterious mother; this the reason for the old lady's strict seclusion; this the reason of her daughter's devoted attention; this the reason for the choice of this house with its secluded compound and high brick wall and single gateway.

And it was so. Some sort of epileptic seizure, developed or given the mastery by the sudden shock of her husband's death, had gradually weakened Mrs. Lyster's powers. She had then come to need her daughter's constant care: she was her only child. And so it had come to pass that she had eaten up her daughter's life—everything lives by devouring something else. Those terrible cañons in Western America have been cut out by the action of soft drops of water. What terrible rifts are made in our lives by the action of very small things! Kate Lyster's precious life had been worn away by a constant trickle of talk. A beauty, Mrs. Lyster still retained her love of dress; a conversationalist, she is now an incessant talker. Making her husband's death the limit of her own life, cutting herself off completely from intercourse with those about her, her talk was entirely about the bygone time. Her daughter had to listen to interminable stories about dead persons and things with an attention that must never be allowed to flag, lest her mother should reproach her with want of interest, lest she should wound and offend her, spoil her pleasure. That dead past of her mother's had eaten up her own living present. Then, as reason lost its controlling power, the poor lady began to be governed more and more by fancies. She had taken up that fancy that she would never look upon any English face except that of her daughter again, and so she would not go beyond the grounds of the house. Then she had taken up the fancy that she could not step out of doors, for fear the sky should fall on her; and so she never left

the house, had not done so for the past four years. And, like all people in her condition, she was very obstinate in her fancies, was not to be reasoned with—that of course not—or persuaded out of them. Miss Lyster's great agitation at the present moment was simply due to the fact that she did not know how she should be able to get her mother out of the house.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE GODOWN.

"It was very good of you to come and see us at this hour of the day," says the old lady very sweetly to Mrs. Fane ; "but you must have found it terribly hot in the sun."

"Yes," says Mrs. Fane.

"But what noise is that in the road, Kitty dear?" goes on the old lady, turning to her daughter—"people screaming and shouting. It is not the Holee time." (The Holee is the Hindu saturnalia.)

"Oh no," says Miss Lyster.

"Do you remember, Kate, how fond you used to be, when a little girl, before you went to England with your aunt Maria—poor Maria! that was the last time I saw her—it was at Allahabad—when she came out again she went to Banda, and died there of fever—of getting those funny sugar sweetmeats, horses and dogs, and elephants, and the parched rice, and having an illumination of your own at the Holee time? And how the native officers used to come and throw the red powder over your father——"

And then she comes to a dead stop: any allusion to her husband makes her pause.

"My dear mamma, the noise you hear," says her daughter quickly, "is that of some people who are trying to break open the gate. There is a disturbance in the city. The people are going about doing mischief. If they can get in and find us here, they will abuse us and

call us names, and may hurt us, may hurt you—may laugh at you.” Her saying that showed how agitated she was.

“ They have come to rob the house ? ”

“ Yes—yes—and——”

“ I had to run out of our house once because of robbers—it was at Ajmere. You would not remember *that*, Kate, because it was the year you were born. I had to run away with you in my arms—in the middle of the night. Ajmere was a terrible place for dacoits. They used to come on their camels and rob a house and then disappear—take the things away on their camels. They used often to kill people. They broke into a seth’s (banker’s) house there, and because they could not get the gold bangle off a poor little child’s wrist they cut its hand off. It happened when we were there. And one night when I was all alone in the house the ayah rushed in and said the dacoits were outside the gate on their camels ; and I had my rings on, and I snatched you up, and we rushed out of the house at the back and went and hid ourselves in a field. And they robbed the house, took away all our silver and my watch and chain and your father’s guns, for which he was more sorry than for anything else. He was not there—he was away at Nusseerabad—and that was how I was alone in the house.”

“ And we must get out of the house and hide ourselves now as you did then.”

“ But you know I cannot go out of the house now, Kate.” And then her face, whose smiling placidity had seemed to them so strange in the midst of their agitation and trouble, begins to work.

“ We must, dear ; it is only a step to the outhouses. We can run across in a second. It is not as if we were going to remain out in the open. It is only from one roof to another.”

“ It does not matter if it is only for the hundredth part of a second,” says the poor old lady, the walking image of a past time, her face beginning to work still more. “ If I only put my head out of doors, the——” (she checks

herself as she glances at Mrs. Fane) "you know what will happen."

It may safely be said that Mrs. Fane now takes a much deeper interest in the poor old lady's illness than she had done before.

"Only to the godown, dear."

The godown, or storeroom, stood only a few yards from the house, along the side of the compound facing the gateway.

"It is only a step—a hop, skip, and a jump."

"I cannot go out of the house! I cannot go out of the house!" the poor old lady now begins almost to scream.

"For my sake, dear," says the daughter pleadingly.

"I cannot! I cannot!" says the mother, still more vehemently.

"You must come, dear, because Mrs. Fane and her daughters are here. You would not have anything happen to them in our house?"

"Of course not, my dear; most certainly not. You go with them, Kate; I can remain in the house by myself."

"How can you? They will injure you—hurt you—annoy you."

Mrs. Fane does not view the old lady's weakness with the same tenderness that her daughter does. She thinks that she could overcome it if she would only try—"make an effort"—that effort which is so much easier to recommend than make, which seems so easy in the case of others, so difficult in our own. At all events, this is not the time for gentle dealing.

"Do you not see, madam, that by giving way to this foolish fancy of yours—how can the heavens fall?—you may cause us to lose our lives; that by this delay you are exposing your daughter, my daughters, to the most frightful risk?"

She speaks in a stern tone of voice. At the mere sound of it the poor afflicted lady had shrunk back a little.

"Oh, you must not speak harshly to her," says her daughter to Mrs. Fane, in a low, quick whisper. "She must not be thwarted; it may bring on a fit."

She was quoting. How many years ago was it that the doctor had said, "She must not be thwarted; it may bring on a fit"? In the interval between lay the vanished and sacrificed prime of her life. A few words which we can so easily utter may represent the misery of years in the life of another. Mrs. Fane hears the words with an angry impatience. But to Miss Lyster they represent the haunting horror of years: this has been the terror that has weighed upon her for years, that her mother should have a sudden seizure, brought on perhaps by some unavoidable opposition to her wishes, her whims and fancies, and should die in it.

"It is for your own sakes that I cannot go out with you," says the old lady, replying to Mrs. Fane.

"For our own sakes?" says Mrs. Fane impatiently.

"Yes, for your own sakes. You don't know it, but if I were to go out of doors with you the sky would fall, and then we should all be killed. I do not want you to be killed. It would be my doing—it would be murder."

Mrs. Fane feels as if she were distracted. What is to be done? They cannot leave Mrs. Lyster in the house by herself, and it appears as if they shall not be able to get her out of it. And the crowd may soon be surging up to the house. It is maddening, thinks Mrs. Fane as she glances at her daughters.

The description of Mrs. Lyster's appearance and condition, which was necessary, or seemed necessary, has caused her entrance into the room to seem far back. But between it and the present moment but a brief interval has elapsed, and yet even in that brief interval the noise of the shouting has increased.

"Another crowd has come and joined the other one," said one servant, an eager-eyed young fellow, to whom all this seems like a play or spectacle, who had just come in from without, to the fellow-servant by whose side he had placed himself.

And now there comes a sudden crash, and the character of the noise has changed: the shrill yelling and howling of the crowd is accompanied by a heavy thud, as the

continuous rattle of musketry may be accompanied by the discharge of a heavy gun, with its deeper roar, in slower sequence.

"They have brought a beam," says the same young fellow, who has run out and run in again, eagerly to Ruheem Buksh, the old khansaman, by whose side he has now placed himself. "They will soon break the gate in now." He wonders what will happen then.

"You must not remain here talking any longer," says the old man to Miss Lyster; "you must get into hiding at once."

"I cannot persuade the 'big lady'—meaning her mother—"to leave the house."

"Then she must be made to," says the old man.—"You catch her left arm, Tulsi" (to the young servant), and, stepping forward, he seizes the old lady by the right arm, and the two men run her out of the room and across the veranda, and then across the few yards of the open to the door of the godown, and put her in; the others, her daughter and Mrs. Fane and her daughters, rush in close behind her. Mrs. Lyster was, as it were, hurried off her legs. She had been run across the open, had passed from under the inimical sky to under the friendly roof before she had even time to scream. She was so slight and slender that they had no difficulty in hurrying her along; her weight afforded no impediment. But, over and above all this, the extraordinary circumstance of their daring to touch her, to lay their hands, their black hands, upon her, had paralyzed her. She was so overpowered for the moment that she passed beneath the open sky without her hallucination having had time to act upon her; otherwise it might have endowed her with that terrible epileptic strength against which the two men would not have been able to cope.

The godown was a long, narrow, earthen-floored room. It had one window in the end looking towards the house, to which there were no shutters, only wooden bars across it, and one doorway, the one they had gone in by, the door of which was wanting, probably for the reason that

nothing of any value had been kept in the place for a long time back ; there were now in it only some old deal cases and some bundles of firewood.

The old servant who has accompanied Mrs. Fane looks at this open doorway with a troubled face.

" They are not safe in there," he says to Mrs. Lyster's old khansaman.

" They can hide themselves in the far corner behind the firewood ; it is dark there. And if any one comes up to the doorway he will see at once that there is no need for him to go in, that there is nothing there for him to take."

" They may go rummaging about the place—and those white dresses are so easily seen ; and there are five of them. It would be better to get the ladies down to the farther offices."

" We could not get my mistress there—never. The demon would get hold of her, work within her, and she would fall on the ground, and roll about and tear herself, and we should not be able to move her."

In India almost every disease is still held due to some malign supernatural agency ; men are there still possessed of devils.

" Otherwise it would have been an excellent thing to have got them down to my house. They would have been quite safe within it. My wife is a *purda nashin* " (sitter behind the curtain).

In England we are apt to have only one idea in reference to this sitting behind the veil, this " zenana system " of the East—that it is a cruel tyranny, a horrid confinement, inflicted on the women by the men. We are not aware that the women themselves have a great pride and pleasure in it, regard it as an honour and a distinction, a mark of social position, of separation from the common herd, of delicacy and refinement, of ladyhood. Great as the difference between the two may seem, there is no doubt that the taking the veil in the Catholic Church was derived from this domestic custom of the East—from the taking of the veil, the sitting behind the curtain, of the girls of the better class, when they had passed

out of childhood and arrived at their early womanhood : in both cases the veil is the symbol of superior purity, of segregation. To become *purda nashin* is an object of ambition, of choice. When a man has risen in the world his wife will set up her purdah, as with us in a similar case she would set up her carriage. When Ruheem Buksh had been only a poor khidmutgar, his first wife, having to do all the marketing and perform all the domestic duties, had used the veil only to the same extent as the wife of any other servant in the compound ; but now that he was a khansaman, a man of means, and could keep a little servant-girl, his second young wife was a *purda nashin* : a peculiar sanctity now attaches to her person and her chamber—that was now sacred ground, safe from all intrusion ; no man dare set foot in it. That was why the old khansaman said that the ladies would be quite safe if they could only enter it.

Then a bright idea comes into Mrs. Fane's servant's head : " Why not pretend that this is your house—that the people of your household " (it would have been held indelicate for him to say " your wife ") " are within ; why not hang up a curtain to this door ? "

" Good—well thought of ! It shall be done." And the old man hurries away, and then soon comes back again in company of another servant who helps him to carry a charpoy, one of the common, rude, light bedsteads, on which he has thrown a purdah or curtain. The curtain is soon hung up before the doorway and the bedstead placed across it, and the two old men—the old khansaman and Mrs. Fane's bearer—place themselves upon it.

In the meantime the stout gate still continues to resist the pushing and hammering brought to bear upon it. It is creaking and bending, and some of the planks have started, and the central chain has given way ; but the bolt at the bottom, a thick iron rod dropping into a socket in a slab of stone, still holds good and prevents the gate from being thrust open.

" We shall not be able to effect an entrance in this way for hours," cries a man in the crowd, impatient for the

plunder. "Hoist me up to the top of the wall, and I will drop down on the inside and draw up that incestuous bottom bolt."

So said, so done.

"Keep back from the gate until I open it for you," the man had said before being hoisted on to the wall. "If you keep pushing at it you will knock me down."

There is a sudden silence, all the deeper because of the preceding din and clamour—because of the preceding rattling and crashing, and resonance and reverberation. The fast-beating hearts of the Englishwomen, cowering down in the dust behind the brushwood in that far-distant stifling corner, now stand still. What may this silence forebode? Can the crowd have moved away? Have some guardians of law and order appeared upon the scene? That hope is soon extinguished. The gate has been pushed open, and the crowd heaves into the enclosure with a sudden terrible yell. The hearts of the Englishwomen contract with a sickening spasm. The pressure from behind carries the foremost men of the crowd right up to their hiding-place, which, as has been said, stands directly facing the gateway. But soon the crowd is moving across the enclosure in the form of a quadrant, one end of which rests on the gateway and the other on the front of the house, which stands at right angles to the wall in which the gateway is situated. This stream soon swells and widens and loses its form; the crowd has passed in at the gateway, and the space in front of the house is inundated with human beings. And now there is a hideous commingling of sounds, of the shouting of men and the shrill yelling of women and boys, of shrieks and calls and cries, of fierce objurgations and contention, of the upsetting and breaking of furniture, the smashing of crockery and glass. These are awful moments to those in hiding in the godown. They are moments of agony, like those of one struggling in the water for his life and having the noise of the breakers in his ears. When they had first settled themselves down in that stifling corner they had thought of

the terrible heat—it had been like stepping into a fiery furnace. But now, when the awful clamour, the sound of the rushing feet, the shouting just without that open doorway, guarded only by a curtain, close outside the shutterless window, informs them that the place is in possession of the mob, they lose all consciousness of anything else in an overpowering rush of fear ; for some moments they have lost their senses in a swoon of terror—all but Mrs. Lyster.

“ My dear Kate, I am very glad that we got in here from under the sky ; but why should we sit in this corner ? You know there is always danger of snakes in these corners. You ought not even to put your hand into a corner ; it is always dangerous. When we were at Dinapore we had such a nice young lad as under-bearer, and he went into a godown like this one to get something, and it was lying in a corner, I suppose, like this one, behind some boxes, and instead of moving the boxes away first, as he should have done, he put his hand down behind them, and a cobra bit him on the finger, and he was dead in a few hours, poor boy,” says the old lady.

But the moments, the first terrible moments have gone by, and no one has entered their place of refuge ; it is evident that the attention of the people is concentrated on the house. It is the first shock of danger or misfortune that overpowers ; then the lost senses come back, the mind recovers its power of action. It is the first entry on a novel situation that confuses ; then comes the sense of familiarity—and it is curious how soon the sense of familiarity may arise even in circumstances of very great danger. But, apart from this, Mrs. Fane has blue blood in her veins—comes of a proud, spirited race, with whom the way of the lion and not the way of the ostrich was the way of meeting danger. They were courageous without thinking, but they also held that cowardice was not only shameful but foolish ; that courage was wisdom—best conduced to your own safety ; the path of honour was the path of safety ; the coward only provoked and invited the danger he wished to avoid—his legs lost the

power of running away ; never give in ; fight it out ; keep the seeing eye, the steady heart, the thinking head, the striking arm to the very last. This danger weighs on her so terribly because of her daughters. But this crouching down is irksome to her proud spirit. She must see what is going on. So she steps from the corner and walks to the barred window at the end of the room. She places herself on one side of it. The hanging up of the curtain to the doorway has had the additional advantage of making it very dark in the room—any one standing out in the dazzling sunshine at some distance from the window could not see anything through it.

It is a strange and terrible sight. The bamboo screens have been torn down from the front of the veranda, from the many outer doorways, and the doors so jealously closed to keep out the heat have all been thrown wide open ; the curtained, closed, homelike, secure look of the place is gone ; it looks unclothed, its sanctity fled ; it is being profaned, violated ; rude feet intrude into what a few moments before was a sanctuary. An Indian home, with its numerous doorways and rooms opening into one another, lends itself to plunder, to the speedy removal of all that is in it. And as the crowd of marauders swarm upon the house as thickly as a flight of locusts upon a tree, so do they clear it as quickly and completely as the locusts clear the tree of its foliage and leave the branches bare. The people, the men and women, and the boys and girls, and the little children, are making away as fast as they can with what they have been able to get hold of. Most of the men have only their caps or turbans on their heads, their loin-cloths round their loins : how their dark bodies glisten with the abundant moisture ! Right opposite to the window are the two doorways leading into the drawing-room, whose rarely valuable and artistic adornment had so taken Beatrice and Lilian Fane by surprise a few, fifteen or twenty, minutes ago ; and from these Mrs. Fane sees the three-quarter naked men, the women whose thrown-back sheets give to view the whole expanse between the

top line of the petticoat and the bottom line of the bodice—they are within fifteen yards of her—pour forth with its beautiful contents in their dirty naked arms. Costly vases are being carried away in grimy hands that have probably never held anything but an earthen pipkin before. A boy is dragging away through the dust a valuable carpet that he cannot carry. Beautiful shawls are clasped under reeking armpits. There is the sound of destruction within the apartment: a picture comes skimming out of one of the doorways and lies there in the dust.

Mrs. Fane can see the dark excited faces. It is strange to have them so near her. She notes, with a feeling of satisfaction, how intent the crowd is upon its work. It seems to have no thought of any other part of the premises than the dwelling-place—and the gateway. No one approaches the godown: no one seems even to look towards it. There is of course a great deal in the house which the plunderers cannot or do not care to carry away—difference of habit rendering them of no use to themselves and their fellow-countrymen—especially at such a moment as this. To-morrow the place will be completely cleared out. To-morrow the furniture-makers and furniture-dealers will come and remove the tables, and sofas, and such like things to their workshops and warehouses. To-morrow no man will be afraid to have an English article, such as an easy-chair, standing conspicuous in front of his miserable little hut. But just now the object is to get possession of the things that can be easily carried away and easily concealed—to get hold of them as quickly as possible, and get away with them as quickly as possible. Mrs. Fane notes, again with satisfaction, how fast the crowd is thinning. Soon there are but a few people left about the house. Then Mrs. Fane gives a start. A horseman dashes in at the open gateway and pulls up his foaming steed close in front of the godown. She knows that French-gray uniform very well. He waves his bloody sword in the air and shouts out, “Where are those

Christian dogs ? Bring them out that I may slay them."

"There are none here," says the old khansaman seated on the bedstead in front of the doorway.

"Where have they gone to ?"

"To the Jumoo Gate."

"Then I may find them on the road," and the young fellow turns his horse round and dashes away again.

"What !" says a man from a neighbouring bazaar who knows the premises well to the old khansaman—"what ! have you made this godown your home ?"

"Yes," replies the old man quietly.

"Since when ?" says the fellow, glancing suspiciously at the curtain.

"Oh, since a few days ago."

"A few days ago ! I was here yesterday evening, and you were in the old place then."

"You mind your own business, and look out for yourself, you thieving scoundrel, for here are some of the Grenadiers from the cantonment."

And it was even so. A corporal's guard of the Grenadiers is at this moment marching in through the gateway.

"You have come to take the ladies away ?" cries the old man, jumping up and running towards them.

"Yes," says the corporal in charge.

"God be praised !" cries the old man ; and, running back, he pushes aside the curtain and calls to those within.

"Come out ! come out ! A guard of sepoy has come to take you away."

Mrs. Fane's heart gives a leap of joy that is almost painful. She and her daughters are soon at the door. The heat and the glare without are terrible. But they step out into them with a feeling of delight. The open air which they would have so dreaded yesterday is most welcome to them now. They have escaped from the gin, the net ; they have come out of the jaws of death.

"But you *must* come out, madam," the old khansaman

is heard exclaiming pleadingly. "You cannot remain here for ever."

"I *must* remain here for ever now," replies the old lady. "I must remain here now until I die."

"The house has been plundered, mother, and we must go away from it for a time, dear; and we have no time to lose. Come out, dear!" her daughter is heard exclaiming coaxingly.

"But I cannot."

"If you remain I must remain with you, and we shall both be killed."

"Perhaps not. But if I were to step out to you now"—she was standing just within the doorway and her daughter and the khansaman just without—"we should both most certainly be killed. I could not do it."

"This is very strange," says the corporal of the guard, who has stepped up to the doorway. "Are not you, madam"—addressing Mrs. Lyster—"the wife of the Colonel Sahib who commanded the 31st Regiment, the *Gillis-ki-pultun*" (Gillies's regiment)?"

"Yes," says Mrs. Lyster, starting and trembling.

"You remember the Soubahdar Bhowanny Singh?"

"Of course—of course."

"I am his son. I was first in the same regiment, though I am now in the Grenadiers. My name is Heera Lall. I used to go with the Soubahdar Bhowanny Singh, my father, very often to your house, and the Colonel Sahib and yourself showed me great kindness and favour."

"The Soubahdar Bhowanny Singh! My poor husband liked him very much—and you are his son?" and she steps out and looks at him and bursts into tears.

"I have been sent to bring you to the Jumoo Gate. We must not delay. Strange, most strange, that I should be the means of saving your life—that it should be so written in the book of fate! It is in return for your kindness to me."

The party moves off, the afflicted old lady prattling away to the naik. This present present is very present to the others, the dead and gone past more present to her.

As they move away Miss Lyster glances towards the house. She should like to run in and bring away those bundles of letters which hold the only memorial of the lost looks and words of love—of that precious love which had to be sacrificed on the altar of filial piety. But after all they are safe enough where they are. They are not likely to be carried away. They are more precious than gems to her, but to no one else. And the wave of destruction has passed: the burst of lawlessness is over. The arrival of these sepoy shows that peace and order are about to resume their sway. They will be back in the house in the evening.

The road to the Jumoo Gate now lies safe and open. The news of the arrival of the Grenadiers has had its effect. The five Englishwomen have soon reached the closed gate. They pass in through the wicket. Their hearts jump for joy. Sweet is security, delightful the sense of escape from danger. How rapturous the feel of the firm land after that of the unsustaining, engulfing water! William Hay runs forward to meet them. Imagine the rapture of that meeting. He did not know what might not have happened to them. He clasps Beatrice by the hand: how fervent his "Thank God!" Lilian's youthful spirits recover themselves with a bound. She feels inclined to skip and laugh. Her bright blue eyes go roving around. They come to a stand on some ladies' dresses lying there on the ground. What! surely she knows the pattern? Yes—they are her sister's and her own; there are no others like them in the station—they were a novelty even in England. Beatrice and William Hay and her mother are entirely occupied with one another. Mrs. Fane has some eager questions to ask. She, Lilian, will bring up one of the dresses and surprise Beatrice. She moves towards them quietly and unperceived—they are not very far off. She lifts one up. She stands there holding it in her hand, transfixed, horror-stricken. She has uncovered the bodies of young Walton and young Hill, lying there so terribly close together, lying there side by side in the deep sound sleep of death,

as they had lain side by side that morning in the deep sound sleep of youthfulness and perfect health—chums still. She is gazing down on the face, the ghastly face, of her poor boy-lover—the rigid face she had always seen so animated, so full of mirth and gaiety ; her horrified eyes are riveted on those fixed, wide-open, upturned, glazed, unlooking eyes which she had last seen so full of boyish tenderness, so full of pleading, of a boyish gravity that would have seemed so ludicrous to an older looker-on : there is nothing ludicrous in them now. And then she throws the dress back with a shriek. Then William Hay, seeing what has happened, hurries to the spot, and quickly readjusting the dress—how the poor, fond, dead boy would have trembled at the touch of it a few hours before (strange that it should come to form his winding-sheet) ! —takes Lilian by the arm and leads her trembling and sobbing away, hurries them all away from the spot, and conducts them up to his quarters.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SACK OF THE BANK.

THOSE of us whose memory of India goes back, as does mine, to nearly fifty years ago, cannot avoid that feeling of pride which we are told that we Anglo-Indians should not entertain at the thought of the work we have done there. The change wrought in that period has been marvellous, and enormously to the benefit of the people. For one thing, we have given them a security of life and property such as was never known, dreamt of, in the land before. When we arrived on the scene we found robbery and murder carried on as open professions, and under religious sanction. Those who would "rob you for two pice and murder you for an anna" (their own saying) were very numerous. There were the guilds of poisoners; there was the fraternity of stranglers, whose name has become known in Europe, the Thugs, with whom death was the unalterable antecedent of robbery; there was the federation of thieves who stole into houses by boring holes through the walls; there were the gangs of bold dacoits who carried houses by storm. And so Sheitanpara lifted up its head when it heard that the rule of those who had interfered so cruelly with the callings of its inhabitants, with their poisoning and strangling, with their robbery by violence, or by thimble-rigging and strap-play and other ingenious devices, was over. The denizens of the Devil's Quarter leaped up at the thought that they should be able to call this day their

own. The news of the murder of the English shop-keeper and his family, of the plunder of his shop and house, set them all astir. Here was the bloody token of the downfall of the English power! Why, here was sanctioned robbery, applauded murder! But when the leaders among them began to consider how they should best realize this sudden and unexpected opportunity, it was not towards the houses of the English people that the thoughts of those highflyers turned. Those houses generally contained little that they thought worth the taking. There was hardly ever any money in them—that was kept at the bank—no costly clothing, no jewels or gems. Except in the case of a valuable gun or a good horse, the things in them best worth stealing were the copper pots and pans in the kitchen, and the conveying of these they left to inferior practitioners. True, there was the delight of killing the English, but that must be indulged in only if it came in their way. They left the plundering of them to the lower orders of their community, to the mob, to the roughs and rogues and ruffians of the town.

Their own thoughts turned towards the houses of their own fellow-countrymen, the dwelling-places of their wealthy fellow-citizens, in which were the underground stores of gold, and silver, and gems—the women and children laden with jewellery, the wearers of necklets, and bracelets, and anklets (all of solid gold), of ear-rings, and nose-rings, and toe-rings, and girdles of silver and gold—where were the valuable shawls and pieces of cloth of gold: houses well worth the robbing. To-day was a day in which a man might make his fortune. But there was one dwelling-place of the English towards which the thoughts of the chief robbers in Sheitanpara turned at once to-day, as they had so often turned before. This was the Bank-house. The leading freebooter among them had often thought, with a longing mind and an itching palm, of the gold and silver collected together in one heap there, of the piles of gold mohurs and rupees. And now there was a chance of getting at

these. When he hears that the 66th has taken the decisive step of slaying its officers, he makes up his mind that to-day at least the English will not be able to maintain that peace and order which, to him at all events, have been such disagreeable results of their rule. To-day lawlessness seems likely to prevail, and, if so; the Bank will be one of the first objects of attention to those who mean to take advantage of it. He must bestir himself if he wishes to be first in the field. He gets together his band, and adding slightly to its numbers—he does not care to make it too large—he starts for the Bank.

The Bank stands by the side of a road that runs from Star Street to the English quarter. Doonghur Singh, the dacoit, would have preferred to have gone round and approached it from the side of the English quarter, so as to have had the best chance of arriving on the scene of action alone; but the distance was too great. He might arrive at the Bank only to find that others had been there before him—to find the gold and silver, yea, even the coppers gone. No, he must make for it from Star Street. As he enters on the road leading to the Bank, he is as much surprised as delighted to find the road so vacant and still. The swirl in Star Street has drawn all the traffic from the neighbouring streets into it: and so the renowned freebooter enjoys the satisfaction of seeing the road running on before him unoccupied by any large throng or band of people, in fact almost empty. But he is a well-known man in Khizrabad, and his entry on the road has been noticed. “The Bank is about to be plundered!”—the cry flies around. Soon the band of professional marauders has at its heels a hurrying crowd, a rushing crowd, with which it must now make a race of it. Some men belonging to the Bank are coming down the road: they rush back in order to give Mr. Hilton warning; but they will not reach the Bank-house much before the others, whose feet are winged by the thought of the rich prize that may await the first men in the race.

We have said that, while the mutineers from Abdoola-

pore were marching up from the River Gate to Star Street, Mrs. Hilton and her daughters, seated in the pleasant western upper veranda of the house, were absorbed in the reading of their English, their *home* letters. The transporting power of the carpet of the Prince Kumar-ul-Zaman in the "Arabian Nights" was nothing compared to that of a sheet of paper which will carry you over such enormous spaces, over oceans and continents, in a second of time. To what a distance have they been carried within the last few minutes—how many thousands of miles away! Away from the vast, flat, alien plain around them, with its mud-walled villages, the only habitations of men upon it—no man daring to dwell alone by himself in mansion, farm-house, or cot—and its numerous mango groves; from the vast plain, just now looking at its worst, where the trees are dust-laden, and for hundreds of miles there is not a single flower, scarce a blade of green grass to be seen—where what is not dry barren plain or dry morass is dry brown fallow. Back to their fair native land, now in all the beauty of the spring-time, with its varied surface and its beautiful widespread greenery, and its tall ancestral trees, and its trim lawns and numerous orchards, its scattered cots, and farms, and mansions—marks of centuries of security, as the absence of them in India is a mark of the opposite—and its gorse-covered commons now aflame with gold, even the barren land fair; and its delightful hedgerows, and its green meadows filled with flowers—one of the most delightful sights in the world. When the two girls are borne away to that distant place by the pieces of paper in their hands, they do not care to look on the aspect of the land, but on the faces of their friends—as yet their greatest friends; to hear of their fortunes, follow their thoughts, share in their hopes and fears. The aspects of any land, its physical characteristics, are not of such moment to them just now as human life, above all their own. India has been to them as yet only a land of excitement, pleasurable excitement and delight, the land in which they have come

to pass their lives, meet their parents, perchance their husbands. They have just seen it under its fairest aspect, during the beautiful winter season. They have not lived long enough in the land they have come to to have a deep craving for the land they have left ; not long enough in a desiccated atmosphere to have an intense craving for cool, moist air ; not long enough on these flat plains to have a deep desire for a land that rises and falls ; not long enough beneath this fiery cope of heaven to have a passionate yearning for a shrouded sky. The aspect of their distant native land, as it was when those letters left it, comes up more vividly before Mrs. Hilton's mental gaze, though she had not seen it for ten years, than before that of the girls who had left it scarcely a year ago.

The letters Mrs. Hilton is most concerned in come from the place in which she was born, and in which she lived until she married and came out to India ; its very sticks and stones form a part of her being. Now is the time for rural excursions, and as mention is made of them how each well-known spot rises up again, clear and distinct, before Mrs. Hilton's eyes. "The children have been to Carswell Glen," she reads in the letter from her mother—an old lady still as brisk and active and cheerful as herself, in whose charge her younger children are—and the aspect of the place in the early spring-time is as clear before her as is that of the Ghilâni Bagh, on which she looks down from the veranda. It was a long narrow dale or valley lying between the high moorland and the sea, cut out by a little stream on its descent from the former to the latter. How clearly she saw that wider middle portion to which the children had gone to gather primroses ! The hurrying brook, the beautiful groups of trees, the moss-grown mill with its calm still pool above and its rushing stream below, the meadows filled with buttercups and daisies, and the golden primroses growing in such profusion everywhere, under these trees, in that hollow, in the cool shadow of the bank above the mill-pond. And then she becomes absorbed in all those little details about the children which have so great an interest for her ;

about Mary's frock and Tommie's jacket, and the change in the colour of Susan's hair (which Mrs. Hilton sighs at), and the loss of her first tooth. And then, when they all meet together at breakfast, the contents of the letters have to be discussed. And Mr. Hilton delays leaving to smoke his cigar, which he does before going down to his office. And when he has retired to his own room the mother and daughters still continue the interchange of information and the discussion thereof. Then Mr. Hilton reappears unexpectedly and says to his wife, "There is a disturbance in the city."

The emphasis means, "Here is the disturbance I have apprehended and we have so often talked about." He was also thinking of the discussion at Mr. Melvil's three days before, on the night of the dance, when Mr. Melvil had so pooh-poohed the notion of such an occurrence.

"A disturbance—in the city?" says Mrs. Hilton, not able to disengage her mind at once from the piece of interesting home gossip she and her daughters have been discussing.

"Yes: a man in the office has brought the news. He does not seem very clear as to what has given rise to it, but it seems rather a serious one. You and the girls had better get out of the city and go up to the cantonment—go to Mrs. Campbell's."

"But we cannot go away and leave you here, John," says Mrs. Hilton.

"I shall be able to manage better by myself, when you are away," says Mr. Hilton. "We have the guard, and I shall have the gates closed, and the compound walls are high, and I will send a man to the police, and, by-the-way, you might drive round by the Brigadier's and tell him that there is a disturbance in the city."

"But, John," cries Mrs. Hilton.

"You know I must remain here, Molly, and you had better get the girls up to the cantonment," says Mr. Hilton, looking earnestly at his wife. "I think I shall be able to keep things straight here, but if it come to the worst I shall be able to get away better by myself. And,

by-the-way, as you must pass through the Jumoo Gate, you might see Hay, and he might be able to send down some of his men to defend the Bank. You will get there sooner in the carriage than a man could on foot. So go and get your bonnets and hats"—and he tells the man who has come in to clear away the breakfast things to run down and order the carriage to be got ready at once. As he is speaking the race for the Bank has begun. Mr. Hilton then hurries down to the Bank rooms. The Bank has a guard consisting of four burkandazes (literally "lightning-throwers"—they are fond of high-sounding epithets in the East), and a duffadar of its own. These men are armed with swords only, but if they will show fight they may keep back a crowd, defend a doorway. And so Hilton sends a peon to order them to come up to the Bank rooms at once. He then tells another peon to run and shut the gate that leads into the Bank grounds on the cityward side. But all this is of no use. The peon would hardly have been in time to close the gate had he gone himself as ordered; but as he went to the chokidar, whose business it was to close and open the gates, and told him to do so, the chokidar arrived at the gateway only when the foremost marauders were rushing through it, and being a robber born and bred himself (in India you always take on a thief to be your chokidar or watchman, not on the principle of setting a thief to catch a thief, but because his wages form a kind of blackmail paid to his fraternity), he promptly joins them.

And now the rushing stream has reached the Bank-house. Mr. Hilton gallantly throws himself in front of it. He is not seized, or struck down, or thrust aside, but simply borne away as if he were a bit of wood in front of a mass of rushing water. The marauders have poured into the long hall in the middle of which is the square underground cellar or vault, specially made for the purpose, which forms the strong room of the Bank. And they have produced the hatchets and crowbars they employ in their large-scale burglaries,

and brought them to bear on the door which leads down into the vault, and which of course lies on the same level with the floor. Doonghur Singh, the experienced leader of the band of dacoits, has disposed his men around the mouth of the vault. They stand three deep and shoulder to shoulder, so as to keep every one else back, to prevent any one else from approaching the treasure-house. The sound of the hatchets and hammers rings through the room. There is no other sound. The dense crowd stands hushed and silent. The shouts and yells with which the crowd had approached the building had died away the moment it had entered it, and every man had to devote his fullest attention to the business before him. Every man is doing his best to thrust himself forward, to work his way as near as he can to the vault. Soon there is no possibility of further movement, the room is so closely packed. But even when there was the naked feet made no noise. In a few minutes after the bursting in of the crowd you would have said that the room was as full as it could be. But the fierce desire of the people to get as near as possible to that central spot produces compression (had not the marauders thrown themselves into the circular form they could not have withstood that pressure), and when no further compression seems possible more and more people keep squeezing in at the doors, keep wriggling themselves in between the others, keep thrusting themselves in between them and the wall.

Then the horizontal flap or lid or door is lifted, and an extraordinary scene ensues. On the first knowledge of the fact a sort of moan goes up from the crowd. The leader of the dacoits and the two or three men he has selected rapidly descend into the vault to make the most of the few minutes they are likely to have fully and freely and uninterruptedly at their command; to get hold of the bags containing the gold mohurs; to the first-comers the gold, to the next the silver, to the last the copper; to the first the coveted gold, with so much more value in so much less compass, with so much less weight. Why,

a man could hardly carry the rupees that would be needed to give him a decent income for life ; he could very easily carry the gold that would make him rich. And the gold is being removed. And these skilful professional thieves may pretty nearly clear out the vault. And so a groan, and then a howl, goes up from the crowd. Most of the men are so closely packed together that they can do nothing but groan and howl and utter bitter execrations ; they are obliged to stand still ; they cannot move. But those immediately round the ring of freebooters commence an attack upon them, attempt to pull them down ; to move them aside. But the freebooters stoutly maintain their formation, prevent the circle from being broken ; they know everything depends on that, and they know that what is being taken out of the vault is being taken out for their own benefit, for the benefit of the whole band. Doonghur Singh and those who have descended with him are handing up the bags of gold to the men who form the innermost row of the ring. And the members of the general public perceiving this are nearly driven mad by it. These obstructionists must be removed ; this ring must be broken. And so the roughs grapple with the robbers—they have no boots on their feet with which to kick them—and there is a fierce wrestling and furious struggling all round the ring, and the huge hall resounds with yells and cries.

“ Thieves and robbers ! ” shout the outsiders, “ would you prevent us from having any share whatsoever in the booty ? Down with the rascals ! ”

And though fighting is more the business of the freebooters, there are many bold, strong men, many professional athletes, among the amateur robbers, and they are rendered furious at the thought of these bags of gold being taken possession of by others within arm's length of them ; they bring all their energies into play, and soon the ring is beginning to be broken into. And now the leader of the band of freebooters, standing on one side of the vault, shouts aloud some order in the secret language of the fraternity, and the men standing on the

other side suddenly run round to him, thus leaving a wide opening, through which the pressing people pour as the dammed-back water rushes through the opened sluice-gate ; and as that water would fall into a hole or hollow if it met it on its way, so do the people fall into the underground vault. They rush down the narrow flight of steps, tumble down them, leap straight down over the edges, and soon the chamber is filled as full as it can be, and then ensues within its four smooth walls, beneath its flat horizontal roof, a scene which it would be impossible to describe. It is as if a wounded deer had fallen down to the bottom of a pit, and a pack of wolves had rushed down upon it there. Terrible is the scramble. Every man is fiercely eager, not only to get hold of some of the coveted wealth, but to get away with it ; and that is the difficulty. It is easy enough to descend into the vault, but to reascend, that is not so easy. It is possible to slip or swing yourself down over the edges into the vault, but you can get out again only by means of the steps, and terrible is the struggle between those madly eager to get down and those fiercely anxious to get up.

* The dacoits and their leader have marched away with their booty. The marauders had passed into the Bank rooms through the veranda which ran along in front of them on the south side of the house. Along the east side ran another veranda, in front of which stood the stately portico, with its tall stone columns, and within it the entrance-hall, from which the main staircase ascended to the upper story. When the Bank chamber which held the treasure vault was crammed to its utmost, when it was not possible for another single person to force himself into it, when men stood on the threshold and blocked the opening of every doorway, a big butcher, a most brawny ruffian, appeared upon the scene. He was a man of gigantic stature. His only clothing was a small linen skull-cap on the top of his head, and a narrow strip of linen between his legs. His coarse and brutal countenance was horrible to look on. He carried in his right

hand one of the instruments of his trade, a long, heavy, sharply-pointed broad-backed chopper or knife. He peers in at one of the doorways, and sees that even he, with all his strength, could not cleave his way through that compacted mass. By the time that he is likely to reach the vault his getting there will not be very profitable; he will come in only for a scramble for coppers. Surely it would be better to be the first to rob the rooms above than the last to rob the rooms below? And so while the mob is entirely occupied at the present scene of action he slips round the corner into the adjoining east, or front, veranda, thence into the entrance-hall, and then proceeds to move quietly up the staircase.

Mrs. Hilton and her daughters have prepared themselves to drive up to the cantonment. Their bedrooms lay on the north side of the huge square building. The freebooters and the attendant crowd have traversed the short distance between the gateway and the southern veranda, have filled up the large room containing the vault, and the ladies, with the whole width of the house between, are not aware of what has happened. Mrs. Hilton is under the impression that her husband has had the gates of the compound closed, that the house still retains its ordinary security. (Very marvellous is that unseen influence which gives our homes a sanctity which even our friends will not encroach upon unauthorized, which makes our lives secure, which guards the persons of men against hurt, and those of women against outrage.) And so the good lady and her daughters are hastening towards the staircase with no other thought than that they will pass down it as usual.

As they are hurrying across the wide landing-place, the huge-statured butcher has begun to ascend the staircase. The three women suddenly balance themselves on the very edge of the descent, stop themselves in the act of putting their feet down on the first step, as they catch sight of that ferocious countenance and that huge naked frame coming round the curve in the middle of the staircase. They are at the top, he half-way up. For

one moment the blood seems frozen in their veins, for one moment they remain balanced, poised in the air. They are accustomed to the sight of nudity such as his, but only in the open air. The appearance of the man in that condition on their staircase in the broad light of day is significant of a terrible change in the usual condition of things. But they are not thinking of that; this is not what affects them, appals them. It is the terrible look on the man's face as he catches sight of them, which is like a sudden stunning blow. And now the fellow shakes the knife at them, and salutes them with a ferocious grin.

Mrs. Hilton was a woman of a quick, ready resolution, Maud of a proud, high courage, Agnes of an utter fearlessness. Whatever the form of it, they were all brave; if they remain standing at the edge of the staircase it is not because they are paralyzed—they have soon recovered from that first sudden shock—but no one of them can fly and leave the others. They see that if this man, with the obvious design to assail them, is once on the same level with themselves they cannot cope with him, cannot *all* escape from him. Two doorways lead into the huge drawing-room behind them, and they would not have time to close both these against him; and even if they had, he would be able to burst them open with his mere weight.

Often what we have jested about becomes a stern reality in our lives. Now what they had joked about at Mr. Melvil's entertainment only three days before—that about Mrs. Hilton having to defend her home with her husband's hog-spear—actually comes to pass. Mrs. Hilton remembers that this spear is standing in a corner of this very landing, only a little way behind her. She springs back and seizes it. She springs forward again to the edge of the staircase and makes a half lunge at the man, now only two steps below the top; a half lunge because she is afraid of his seizing the head of the spear, because she has a womanish fear of feeling it strike him. A full lunge would have settled the controversy,

for the man's naked chest was on a level with her held-down hands. But the dart of the bright point towards him makes the man quickly descend a couple of steps : then Mrs. Hilton goes down two steps after him, the spear held down at the charge ; and the man continues to retreat, and she continues to press upon him ; and that she does so affords the highest proof of her courage, for the sound of the blows on the door of the strong-room is now reverberating through the house, and Mrs. Hilton recognizes what it means ; but still she continues to press on the man, and now he has reached the corner where the staircase turns almost at right angles. He glares up at her and shakes the knife at her even more ferociously than before, and then, snarling out some terrible terms of abuse which she does not understand, shouts out, " I will bring some others with me, and we will then cut your throat," disappears round the angle. Mrs. Hilton moves slowly up the staircase, keeping an eye behind her ; but the moment she has reached the landing she and the girls fly into the adjacent drawing-room, across it into the adjoining bedroom, across that into the veranda beyond, and then down the back staircase. And when they have gained the bottom of the staircase, imagine the delight of the wife when she beholds her husband, the delight of the daughters when they behold their father, turning the corner of the house. Mr. Hilton had met with no adventure ; he had simply been extruded from the Bank parlour ; had waited a little until he had been joined by some of the principal clerks, who, to his joy, had brought away some of the principal books ; then, seeing the strong-room forced, he was coming round to this back staircase in order to make his way to the upper rooms to his wife and children, whom he too was now overjoyed to see.

They all hasten together towards the stables. The numerous servants, and their wives, and their numerous children, are all standing out in front of the offices. The horses are just being put to. The carriage is now ready. They have got in and driven off. They have reached the

gateway that leads into the English quarter. Here there comes a sudden stoppage. It comes from a party of sepoys, at the head of whom is the old Brahmin, the old Soubahdar Matadeen Panday, who had proposed to himself an early visit to the Bank from the very first moment that the mutineers from Abdoolapore had entered the palace. It was only the knowledge of the importance of securing the Jumoo Gate that had delayed him. When he had returned to Star Street with the 66th after the slaying of its officers, he had immediately started for the Bank with a party of his own men. Notwithstanding Mr. Hilton's remonstrances—he even uses threats, at which the sepoys laugh—the carriage is turned round, and Mr. Hilton is informed that he and his “house-folk” are prisoners, and shall be conveyed as such to the palace. Old Matadeen Panday was enormously pleased at this seizure, because he thought he would be able now to plunder the Bank easily and thoroughly. Imagine then his chagrin, his disappointment, his rage, his fury, when on reaching the Bank House he finds that its treasure-room is not only in the hands of the mob, but that it has been almost completely emptied out. He pours forth the vials of his wrath on such of the men as he sees without: calls them thieves and robbers, rogues and rascals; and then, not thinking it worth while to enter into a struggle for the poor gleanings of the treasure-vault, he marches his men away.

It seems like a dream to the Hiltons to find themselves dismounting at the gateway of a large square enclosure in the palace; to find themselves passing through it; to find themselves conducted across a dirty courtyard, and ushered into a long dirty apartment, and there to find themselves face to face with the very last man they should have expected to see there—Mr. Melvil. He, the local monarch and king, in such a situation! A few hours ago it would have seemed inconceivable. Mr. Melvil questions them eagerly about all that they have gone through. “Was it not strange that I should actually have to use my husband's hog-spear?” says Mrs.

Hilton. She forbears from saying, "You see there was a disturbance in the city after all." A glance at Mr. Melvil's face has shown her how deeply he feels his present situation. Mr. Melvil condoles with them—condoles with Mr. Hilton about the loss of the money in the Bank's strong-room.

"But you say the books were saved?"

"Yes, the principal ones. I hope none of them may be injured. The mob came for the money."

Mr. Melvil's minute and reiterated inquiries are made in a very kindly manner. But the Hiltons can see that they are not prompted solely, or mainly, by concern for them. He seems to be collecting the information for official purposes: and such is indeed the case. "Reports" form a leading feature in official life in India. Mr. Melvil was a great hand at writing them. He will have to send in a report of the occurrences of to-day, in which the plunder of the Bank must occupy a prominent place. He is already planning that report in his mind. But in the midst of all his inquiries breaks forth this impatient cry, "That I should be in here now when I ought to be out in the city giving orders, commanding and directing; that I should be condemned to inaction on such a day as this!" The angry complaint is repeated over and over again, in various forms. He was an able and ambitious man. But it was not of himself alone that he was thinking, not only of the loss of a chance of distinction. He knew that the want of his guiding hand this day might be productive of the most serious consequences to his countrymen and the Government, of which he was so devoted a servant. For the admiral to be absent from the fleet, the general from the army, on the day of action—it was terrible. Mr. Melvil paces continually up and down the room in his excitement. "That I should be in here on such a day as this!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

INTO THE LION'S DEN.

HAY, being the officer on duty for the week, had to take the main part of his establishment of servants down to the quarters at the Jumoo Gate. Lennox had settled, therefore, to return to his own temporary home in the adjoining native State on this Monday too. But it is hard to part with the girl you love a couple of days after you have become engaged to her. He really has had only one day with her, he argues with himself, for Sunday is a *dies non*. He must have one more evening ride with her, one more moonlight stroll. And so something turns up that makes it really absolutely necessary for him to remain in Khizrabad one day more—to stay over Monday.

He has seen his lady-love home from the parade-ground, and as he leans back in an easy-chair in Hay's quiet, deserted bungalow after his return, she occupies the whole of his thoughts for a good while to come. And when he has turned his thoughts away from her personally, it is still in connection with her that he must continue to think. He has to arrange for the furnishing of their future home. His own personal surroundings have always been characterized by an extreme plainness. Upholstery had no charms for him. He was not deeply affected by the colour of a cup. The form and fashion of his teapot and his sideboard, and the relationship between the two, were matters of no moment to him. For him the har-

mony of the spheres did not lie in the harmony between curtain and carpet. He would have considered our modern æsthetical young man a very despicable fellow. He had been accustomed to dress roughly and live roughly—in camp fashion. That camp life had shown him how little a man really needs. (We have already noted how plain living was the rule of life with Lennox's friend and cousin, William Hay, too. But with Lennox it was purely natural, a matter of constitution ; with Hay artificial, in the sense that it was not so much due to natural inclination as to early inculcation and example, to its being placed before him and chosen by him as the preferable thing. The feminine delicacy of his temperament rather inclined Hay to fastidiousness, made him desire everything about him, in his surroundings, as in his conduct, to be delicate, and nice, and proper.) But now Lennox has to take thought for these things. In the remote frontier station to which he expects and desires to return there is very little of what he wants to be got, and it is not easy to transport things to it. He has to order many things for the home he desires to prepare for May Wynn out from England. He would very much rather put the whole business into May's own hands, and give her *carte blanche*. He will do so as far as he can. But she might be diffident in carrying out the task ; might consider what he deemed only fitting for her extravagant. There were some things he must buy himself. He meant to buy for her the most beautiful Arab horse within reach, no matter what the cost of him may be. He himself loved a good horse, though he did not care for teapots, and to see May's beautiful figure on a beautiful horse was one of the chief pleasures he looked forward to.

And he has something to do at once in connection with his marriage. He has to write and announce it, and describe May Wynn to his best friend—his mother. The relationship between him and his mother had always been very close and dear and intimate. There was a great similarity between them. It often happens that a man

may derive his stronger, more masculine characteristics from his mother, his softer and more feminine ones from his father. Philip Lennox was indeed the son of his mother. It was from her that he had derived his large, strong frame, his regular features, and his lofty, austere, unbending character. He had been loved as the only son. As so often happens, his mother had looked to him for that complete satisfaction of her love and pride which she had not derived from her husband. And, more fortunate than most mothers, she had not been disappointed. She had received of love enough ; the love of the mother and son for one another was the deeper because that was a commodity they did not, owing to the austerity of their characters, share much with others, neither receiving it from, nor bestowing it on, many. And her pride too had received high gratification. Her son had not yet written his own dispatch, as he told her he meant to do, but he had been mentioned in many a one. He had already made a name for himself. Her weak, kind-hearted, amiable husband having lost them their estate, had taken it to heart so much as to die, leaving his young widow in very straitened circumstances. Philip Lennox knew what privations his mother had undergone for his sake to launch him properly in the world.

It had been his pride and his joy to make amplest return for this. It had been but a few months before that he had insisted, now that she was getting so old, on her keeping a carriage. For some time past she had been urging him to marry. She should depart from the world happier if she knew that she had not left him in it alone and solitary. Probably she understood also the need of a softening influence in his life. And now he has to write and tell her of his engagement. However glad she may be to hear this, it must have a sad side for her too. He would now be parting from her : " for this cause shall a man leave father and mother and cleave unto his wife." And then he has to describe May Wynn to her. How is he to give **any** description of her excel-

lencies of mind and body and soul, of person and intellect and character, which shall not be deemed rapturous and exaggerated, sober and exact and below the mark as he may know them to be ? He recalls her sweet face as he had seen her first this morning, seated by the side of her father. And then, somehow, the father's face rising up with the daughter's, he remembers his intention of consulting Mr. Wynn about certain religious difficulties with which he was troubled, and which a residence in India is apt to engender. And then those doubts and difficulties present themselves to him in a new light. How was his statement of them likely to affect the relationship just established between himself and Mr. Wynn and his daughter ? Would it horrify them very much ? Would it shock and distress May very much ? Suppose he found it impossible to overcome those doubts and difficulties, how would it affect their relationship ? He had hitherto considered the matter only, as it were, from an abstract point of view, as one appertaining not to this world ; but now he sees that it is not only a matter of choice but of necessity, of right, that he should make known these doubts to Mr. Wynn and to May. Then he begins to think of the appearance of the troops on parade that morning. A born soldier, that is a sight that interests him always. He had watched the set-up of the three different regiments attentively this morning ; made an estimate of their respective fighting power. While he is so thinking one of his servants comes rushing in, and cries out in a loud voice, " Sir ! Cherisher of the poor ! the sepoy regiments have mutinied ! "

" What ! " says Lennox, raising himself up a little from his easy lounging attitude.

" The sepoy regiments have mutinied ! "

" What ! all three ? "

" Yes ; all three. Both the sepoy regiments and the cavalry regiment also."

" But there is no cavalry regiment here, man void of understanding."

" At Abdoolapore."

"Oh, at Abdoolapore," says Lennox, his voice less sharp, more indifferent.

"But they are here!" cries the man, that tone of indifference making him raise his own voice still higher.

It was not Abdula the Afreedee, Lennox's own body-servant, that fierce-looking, fierce-tempered young fellow whom so many wondered at his keeping about him, as one might wonder at any one keeping a wild cat instead of a tame one, a young lion in place of a dog—he would not have been agitated, unless pleasurably, by such news—but another.

"Here?" says Lennox.

"Yes; they have got into the city, and——"

There is plenty of excitement in Lennox's voice now as he gets swiftly up and exclaims, "Got into the city! Good God!"

"Was there no information of their coming?" he asks as he pushes back the chair.

"I do not know. But all the regiments here have been made to accoutre and arm again, and *Lind-ki-pultun*" (the 66th) "is marching down to the city with two guns."

"Order my horse," says Lennox as he moves into the adjoining bedroom—he has been sitting in Hay's pretty little drawing-room—in order to put on his coat and get his hat.

In a few minutes Lennox is thundering along the roads leading down to the Jumoo Gate. His noble coal-black steed is not puzzled and fretted as he was three mornings before by alternate loosening and tightening of the reins—by being allowed to bound forward one moment and thrown back on his haunches the next. To-day, from the moment when he had bounded forward at topmost speed responsive to the sharp pressure of his master's unarmed heels, to the one blow of the whip, enough for him with his fiery temper, there had been nothing but a free head and a flowing rein. He might devour the road to the top of his bent. Men tumble out of his way as he goes flying by. And now the sparks are flying

from under his mighty hoofs as they fall on the iron bolts and bars of the drawbridge at the Jumoo Gate, for not even here is his progress stayed, not until he has passed through the outer gate and dashed into the enclosure between it and the inner one. Then he is pulled up. (As it was known that Hay was not at his bungalow to-day, the official summons to hasten to the lines had not been carried to it as it had been to the bungalows of the other officers. The bungalow stood in a remote part of the station. Hay's servants had left for the Jumoo Gate early in the morning. Thus it had happened that the strange and unexpected "local news" of this morning had reached it and Lennox so very late.)

When Lennox got to the Jumoo Gate, the Lind Regiment, so called after the man who had raised it about a century before, had passed through the gateway; had passed out of the service of the Company to which it had proved so faithful for nearly a hundred years; had mutinied; had slain its officers, and the terrible news had been sent up to the Brigadier in cantonments.

It may be imagined with what excitement Hay communicates the intelligence of all that has happened; with what excitement Lennox receives it; with what excitement they discuss the situation.

"The English troops from Abdoolapore ought to be here very soon," says Hay in conclusion.

"Here very soon!" cries Lennox, and in his voice there is that deep, strong intonation, on his face the look which on the wild western frontier had made the fierce men about him very silent, very prompt in their obedience, elated though they might be at the thought that it meant woe to the enemy.

"If they *are* coming, their doing so ought to have been needless. Forty miles! Why, these mutinous scoundrels should not have been allowed to get ten miles away from the place. Why, there is a whole regiment of English cavalry there—a troop of horse artillery. Mark my words: if they have not come already they are not coming at all. If the Brigadier is counting on their coming he is making a

mistake. I must get to him and tell him so. He ought to have marched down into the city himself with all the force at his command—he ought to have brought the Grenadiers.”

“I suppose he does not wish to leave the cantonment defenceless.”

“He ought to have placed himself at once in touch with these fellows, and never lost touch of them. They may play the very devil in the city.”

“But why do you think our men from Abdoolapore are not likely to come at all?”

“Because old Heavyside is in command there. I saw him when he was up at Peshawar. They soon removed him from there. He is now nothing but stomach; cares for nothing but eating, unless it be his rubbers of whist. He can hardly mount a horse. He has no go, no energy, no decision. I must get up to the Brigadier. I wish I had put on my uniform at once. I must go back for it. But I must first do what I came down here for—get May and her father out of the city.”

“I have written to Mrs. Fane that she had better come here with the girls.” This letter never reached them. “I would go for them, but of course I cannot leave my post.”

“No; but I can call for them on my way back with the Wynns.”

“Will you, old chap? That would be very good of you.”

“Yes. All the women and children should be got out of the city at once. Parties should be sent for them.”

“We have no one to send,” says Hay, glancing towards his own men with their sullen lowering looks, glancing across the enclosure at the company of the 66th—“none whom we can trust.”

“I must lose no time in getting our friends together and getting them in here,” says Lennox.

“I shall be very glad to see them safe on their way to the cantonment. I have been in a terrible state of mind for the past half-hour,” says Hay. “But you have no

weapons, Phil. The scoundrels of the 66th have moved on to the city, but there are crowds of ruffians on the roads. You can hear them yelling and shouting. They may possibly attack you, delay you. I wish you had your pistols or your sword—that sword.”

Lennox had made his name at his distant dangerous outpost not merely by the force of his will and his intellect, but also by the force of his strong right arm. In repelling the incursions into his own territory, in conducting the punitive expeditions into that of the enemy, he had to do a great deal of the actual fighting as well as all the generalship. He had to be foremost in the attack as well as foremost in the pursuits—those long-sustained, unrelenting pursuits which had tended to make his name feared as much as had his fiery onslaughts. The official piece of iron provided by the military outfitter was not suited for such work as this. Lennox had therefore had a sword specially made for himself of choicest metal, a long straight cavalry sword, equally good to cut or thrust with. It has been mentioned already, I think, that Lennox had with much difficulty prevented the formation—or, rather, the extension beyond the original members—of a sect calling itself by his name and paying him divine worship. The supernatural virtue that was held to attach to him personally was also held to reside in this famous blade. It was held to be of ethereal temper. See how it went through limb and body, as if they were made of butter and not of flesh and bone! Its flash meant death as surely as the gleam of the sword of Azrael. This was the weapon Hay referred to.

“ Oh, Monarch will carry me through any crowd we are likely to come across, and I do not think I shall need anything more than this,” and he holds up the hunting-crop in his hand. It is an ordinary hunting-crop, but Lennox had chosen one with a very heavy metal handle, and he had strengthened the junction of that with the stick or stem, and he had had the whole of the stem from handle to loop covered with a coil of fine brass wire, as the natives often cover their sticks and clubs, not only to ornament,

but strengthen them. Always to ride about his district armed would have been a slur on his own administration ; and yet it was as well to have about one something that would ward off the sudden blow of a club, the sudden slash of a sword, that would serve as a life preserver ; and this crop served these purposes very well.

“ It is only a few minutes’ ride, at the pace I intend to go.”

When Lennox passes out of the gateway he does not take the road along which the regiment had marched, but one to the left, one leading directly into the English quarter. The pace he intends to go is the utmost speed of his horse. He does not choose the softer sides of the road, seek the shade of the trees, but goes straight down the hard, wide, burning centre. He comes to the corner of a bazaar where the road is blocked by a crowd of men. The crowd is stationary, and facing his way, looking towards the important gateway he has just come from. There is a movement in the crowd, a closer compacting into the middle of the road as if to stop him ; but Lennox does not draw rein, and his horse passes through the crowd like an “ eight-oar ” through a mass of foam. Abuse and execration—they may send that after him if they will. Again a glaring, straight, open length of the road, soon passed over, and now he has to turn a sharp corner, and as he does so he finds himself almost on the top of a group of children—boys. He has to tighten rein, to pull up dead. They scatter with a yell of peculiar shrillness ; they keep running even when far beyond reach of the horse’s hoofs, as if they were fleeing from Lennox’s presence, as if they feared a pursuit from him, as if he had detected them in the commission of a crime. Such indeed was their fear, as Lennox understands when he sees the object round which they had been gathered, an object which prevents him from immediately continuing his course. There in the middle of the road, with the vivid sunshine on the lifeless face, lies the body of a man in English dress. Lennox recognizes the body as that of an old Eurasian clerk in one of the public offices.

The poor old man had evidently been on his way to his office, for at some distance further down the road stands his palanquin carriage. The horse has been taken out of it, and one man is walking off with him and the whip, while others are removing the cushions out of the carriage, round which a large group of men is standing. Lennox sees that they are armed with swords and spears, as well as with the usual heavy lethal club. (It is a band from the Devil's Quarter.) He can retreat easily enough, but the sight of that armed band, of the dead man in the road, renders that impossible. He must now keep his onward way ; he must get to the Wynns' as soon as he can.

There is the broad metalled centre of the road for wheeled traffic, on either side the earthen track under the shadow of the line of trees for horsemen and pedestrians ; beyond these the ditches, beyond these a high brick wall on one side and a thick hedge on the other. He cannot get round this plainly murderous band, he must get through it ; and he would have had no difficulty in dashing through it as he had dashed through the one at the corner of the bazaar, only with more risk of injury to himself or his horse, which he feared most, from the men being so much better armed ; but the plundered vehicle has been turned at right angles to the road, and completely blocks up the middle portion of it. He had not that broad space to feint and swerve and manœuvre about in. He must pass down one of the narrow side paths. And there his attention will be distracted, his progress impeded, by the branches of the trees ; his own height and the tallness of his steed raises his head a long way from the ground. The stems of the trees would also be serviceable to his adversaries ; they could get behind them and dodge round them. After a brief interval of observation and silence, of watching to see whether he headed a band or came alone, the marauders greeted him with a yell, and then with a volley of abuse in which the words Feringhee, and Christian, and Kafir are coupled with Incestuous, and Brother-in-law, and Pig, and many another opprobrious epithet. They were evidently at

first under the impression that Lennox would be sure to go back ; but when it becomes apparent that this is not the case, that he intends, on the contrary, to proceed on his way, that he is moving up towards them, they at once prepare to stop him. They throw themselves into the side pathways, they show that they know how to take advantage of the lines of trees, they are men accustomed to highway robbery. There is only one little stratagem that Lennox can resort to. He heads his horse as if he meant to pass the carriage standing across the road on the right-hand side, and then by a sudden movement of the body, by a sudden pressure of the thighs, by signifying his wish to his horse as much as by the direct pull on the rein, he suddenly turns big Monarch round almost at right angles, and dashes across the road on to the opposite side path. The men standing here are taken by surprise ; he has passed through them. But it is with diminished speed, and he passes too close to the line of trees, behind the stems of two of which a couple of the marauders have hidden themselves. One of these leaps suddenly forward, and throwing himself on the reins stops the horse and bears him back on his haunches ; the other man, jumping out, makes a thrust at Lennox with his spear. For this Lennox is obliged to him. He might have slain or fatally wounded his horse. That he had not done so was not due, as Lennox supposed, to a mistakenly eager desire to kill him, Lennox, or to want of experience in such matters. To bring down the horse or pony with a swinging blow on the fore-leg with his club, to overpower the sword-armed horseman in the confusion and helplessness of his fall, was a trick which the dacoit, for such he was by birth and profession, had often practised on many a trader riding along with well-filled bags ; but here he thought, in the first place, that Lennox, having only his riding-whip in his hand, was an easy prey, and he was anxious, in the second place, not to injure the noble animal he desired to secure as a prize for himself.

Lennox parries the thrust ; and now it fared ill with this dacoit that he wore not on his head his fighting

turban, the twisted folds of which are capable of resisting a sword-cut ; that his shaven crown is covered only by a thin linen skull-cap which would not break the blow of a switch. For full upon that shaven crown comes the heavy handle of the whip. The blow would have sent him to the ground were his thickest turban on his head ; but not as now, stone dead. His thievings and his maraudings, which seemed to him so legitimate, so commendable, and his earning of money for his wife and children, and his offerings to his gods, all are over now, perchance for ever. Then Lennox bends forward and strikes the other man a blow on his nearest arm. • The man lets the broken limb drop to his side, and jumps back with a howl of pain. Then Lennox dashes forward again. A few minutes of galloping at that headlong pace bring him to the church. Its broad compound stretches out quiet and still, and looking across it there rises up the high pyramidal roof of the parsonage—as it was sometimes called—with the criss-cross work of split bamboos running along the ridge. There stand the two ancestral mango trees shading the little wicket—spot most memorable to him on earth ; his eye rests fondly on it even now as he dashes by. And now he has entered the little side road leading down to the house ; now he has passed through the gateway into the quiet, secluded, tree-shaded compound. It lies as still and quiet as usual ; the turmoil of the sunshine is the only turmoil there. But when he gets up to the front of the house he sees that here everything is not as usual—the dear, delightful usual, against which we sometimes chafe as monotonous and dull, so full of calm, and peace, and quiet, of truest happiness. Instead of one servant seated in the veranda to receive and announce visitors, he sees four or five of them standing in a group outside the house engaged in eager conversation. There is a sudden curious stir and movement among them, a sudden curious look upon their faces, as Lennox pulls his foaming steed up within a few feet of them.

“ Is your mistress in the house ? ” he calls.

"No!" they all shout out in unison, as if with a single voice.

"The Padre Sahib and the Miss Baba are both on their way to the palace," cries the most nimble-tongued of them all, eager to be the first to deliver the news.

"On their way to the palace!" cries Lennox in some surprise, though with a feeling of relief. If they have reached the palace-fortress it is all right; they will be safe enough behind its lofty walls.

He has no knowledge of what has gone on in the palace, of what is going on there now. For no intimation of it had reached Hay, from whom he had derived all his information. That the mutinous sepoy from Abdoolapore had got into the city, that the 66th had been sent down against them, and had mutinied and slain its officers, that was all that Hay, the English officers with him at the Jumoo Gate, the Brigadier and his staff, all of them knew at the present time. That bands of the *bud-mashes* (literally "evil-livers," correspondingly "roughs") of the town were going about plundering and murdering he had seen for himself, and knew in addition. But his feeling of satisfaction receives a shock when his eager and voluble informant bawls out,—

"As prisoners!"

"As prisoners!" cries Lennox, with a sensation at his heart such as he had never in his life experienced before. May Wynn a prisoner! In the hands of the mutinous sepoy, in the hands of a band of ruffians!

"This man will be able to tell you all about it, sir," says the long-coated, long-bearded, big-turbaned old khansaman, who, as the head of the household, considered that it was his own business to have informed Lennox of what had happened, but whose age and dignity prevented him from being able to compete in volubility with the young man who had spoken—the gardener. What business was it of his? He was an outdoor and not an indoor servant! His concern was with the growing of flowers and vegetables, and not with the movements of the family. The khansaman points

to a dapper little man, whose dress, as well as the leading rein—or rather rope—in his hand, proclaims him a groom.

“ We had driven out of the compound and got as far as the *pukée suruk* ” (metalled road), says the groom.

“ I had gone down to the city to make some purchases—some potatoes and other things,” says the old khansaman, interrupting him, “ and when I reached Star Street I heard much noise and clamour there—a great *bulba*.” He draws a breath.

“ And many of the shopkeepers had shut their shops. And there was great confusion. And everywhere people were shouting and screaming. And all the bad men of the town had come out and got together, and were moving this way and that, and plundering the shops and ill-treating the people. And I heard them crying out, ‘ Kill the Feringhees! Kill the Feringhees!’ and a shopkeeper told me that they had killed Mr. Brasput [Beresford, the English shopkeeper] and all his family, and plundered his shop. And they were crying out that the rule of the English was over, and that of the Nuwâb Sahib re-established.”

“ Ha ! ” exclaims Lennox.

“ And I was told that the two regiments of sepoy and the one regiment of troopers at Abdoolapore had mutinied and come over here, and that their coming was the cause of all this disturbance.”

Another pause to draw breath. “ Go on,” cries Lennox, harshly.

“ And so I came home and told all these things to the master, and as this house is in such a lonely position I advised him to go up to the cantonment, and he said to the Misee Baba [young lady] in English—but I understand English, I was a seeker of knowledge [student] at the Bareilly College—that the sun was very hot, but that it would be best for them to go, if only that they might find out what had really happened; and they settled to go up to the house of the Brigade-Major, who

is a great friend of my master's. And so the carriage was got ready and they started."

"We had got to the metalled road," continues the groom, "when four sowars [troopers] came galloping up and stopped the carriage, and they cried out, 'Kill the Feringhee brother-in-law!' but the coachman said, 'It is the Padre Sahib;' and then they said, 'Well, if it is the Padre Sahib, let us take them up to the palace—they have got some other prisoners there,' and they told the coachman to turn the carriage round the other way, and drive on, and they rode on either side of the carriage. And when I saw which way they were going, I let go the carriage and ran back; I was frightened"—such frank admissions of cowardice are not uncommon in the East, especially among the timid Bengalees—"and I also thought that it would be better to come here and give information of what had happened."

"How long ago was this?" Lennox asked.

"Only a few minutes ago!"—again a chorus of voices.

"Then they will not have reached the palace yet?"

"Oh, no!"

"Along the usual road?"

"Yes."

Lennox has turned his horse and dashed furiously out of the compound and soon regained the metalled road along which he had come from the Jumoo Gate, and dashes furiously along it. The road makes many sharp turns and twists, but the trouble of getting round the corners is the only trouble he meets with on it. It lies as deserted as it usually does at this hour of the day. Now he has reached the point where the road crosses the water-course which traverses the city, so greatly to its benefit. Taken off from the Jumna at the point where the river emerges from its parent mountains, the canal rejoins it here, below the city walls. At the point to which Lennox has now reached the stream has its first drop down the descent to the valley of the river, and here has been put up a mill. It is a pretty scene. The broad placid pool above the mill is surrounded by trees which have attained

to a splendid height and a magnificent spread of foliage ; around it is a margin of green grass, delightful to the eye.

And everything here is going on as usual. Within, the upper stone is whirling round and the little bit of wood is rattling and dancing upon it, and giving a gentle but continuous shaking to the mouth of the hopper, to which it is attached, so that the grain comes dribbling forth in a continuous stream, and the white flour is flying out from between the stones, and adding to the white heap around, and the miller is moving about with his bare black body all white. Without is a little drove of donkeys, on to whose backs the sacks of flour are being loaded, and here are some ponies and long-eared mules from whose backs the sacks of grain are being lifted, and women are seated about waiting for their measure of meal, and the birds are drinking at the pool or flying about among the trees, and the curly-tailed squirrels are racing about, and the crows are cawing—somewhat hoarsely, because of the heat—and from far up in the air comes the shrill keen cry of the kites. On to this peaceful scene Lennox arrives, all hot and furious, his horse's coal-black steaming sides all flecked with foam. Here he pulls up for a moment. Two roads run towards the palace from here, this metalled one and another, unmetalled, but more direct. They may possibly have taken that. He has pulled up to inquire.

"Has a carriage containing an English lady and gentleman passed this way?"

"Yes, the Padre Sahib and his daughter."

"Yes—yes! Which way have they gone?"

"They were escorted by some troopers."

"Which way?"

"That," pointing down the unmetalled road; and soon Lennox's horse's hoofs are sending up clouds of dust along it. Swiftly along, under the shadow of the old ancestral trees. And here he is under the palace walls, and yet he has not caught sight of the carriage. There it is: he has caught sight of the back of it, with the troopers riding alongside. And now he urges his horse

on more furiously than ever. But he has view of the whole length of the carriage now: can see the white skirt of May Wynn's dress. The carriage has turned at right angles towards the palace. Now it is upon the drawbridge; now it has passed in through the gateway. He pulls up. What must he do now?—go in after it, or go back? His strongest desire is to return. He has a burning desire for action. The strife-fever is upon him. This is a day in which a man may earn distinction, render good service. He has a strong, perhaps overweening, sense of his own capacity. He fears that old Brigadier Moss will not prove equal to the occasion: his mental and his physical powers are both on the wane. It will be best for *her* that his own strong brain and arm should this day have the freest play and fullest exercise. That is his temptation. He has pulled his horse up to a walk. They have reached the curve where the road turns at right angles towards the palace. Here he brings him to a standstill for a moment. Into the palace, or back to the cantonment? He has put his horse to a gentle trot; he has crossed the drawbridge and passed in through the gateway. He has entered the lion's den voluntarily, of his own accord.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE POWDER MAGAZINE.

MR. MELVIL and Major Fane had observed the approach of the mutineers from the top of one of the walls of the Arsenal. When Melvil had driven away to have River Gate closed, Fane had ordered the freshly-arrived guard of the 76th to keep under arms ; and, though he did not think that absolutely necessary, had ordered the cityward gate of the Arsenal, at which the guard was posted, to be closed, only the wicket being left open, and had then moved away himself—an orderly holding over his head the great umbrella covered with coarse red canvas which is in such constant use at this time of the year—towards the Water Gate, which he orders to be barricaded as well as closed. He orders some ammunition to be taken up to the guns which command the bank of the river, though it seems to him that the simple closing of the two gates, the massive gates, the only two leading into the place, is the only precaution needed. Then he proceeds on his usual morning tour of inspection.

As the Arsenal opens at six and closes at twelve, it was just now in full swing of work. There is no sound of machinery, for there is none, but bellows are blowing, and forges glowing, anvils ringing, and files rasping, and there is the sound of the sawing of wood. There is the rumbling of the heavy magazine carts as they move to and fro. Men are busy everywhere, in the workshops, and the store-rooms, and the office, and out in the open yards. Here they are busy manufacturing the cartridges which

are the ostensible cause of the wrath of the enemy now at the gate ; there they are making leather accoutrements, that work marking those employed on it as low-caste men. Here stores are being issued, there received ; men are busy packing and unpacking. Native accountants, seated cross-legged on the floor, are busy writing from right to left. Black Bengalees, clad in loose transparent muslin garments, are carrying on the clerklly duties for which they are so eminently fitted ; most of the English non-commissioned officers, born before the days of school-boards, write their own language with stronger, stiffer, less dexterous fingers than these men. Outside, in the yards and enclosures, men are piling up shot and shell, moving guns about. In the great armoury men are putting things up and taking them down, are busy polishing all metal work up to the extremest degree of brightness. The tide of work is in fullest flow. Then comes a sudden ebb, a sudden check, a sudden universal slackness as the news of the closing of the gates, and the reason for it, flies like magic through the place. The pens, whether of reed or of steel, glide less swiftly over the paper ; the rasping of the files is not now so continuous ; the clang of the anvils is less full ; the forges do not glow as fiercely. Men loiter in their movements, pause in their work, eye and hand are no longer bent fully upon it, the mind is withdrawn from it. The artisans hang over their work, look around them and talk. There is a sudden movement of awakening—the absorption in work is a sort of sleep—and expectation. The ordinary routine of the place is broken. It is resumed, voices are hushed, heads bent and hands busy again, every one at work, as Major Fane passes through the various yards and workshops and store-rooms, for his quiet, easy presence always has a very commanding influence. But when he has made his round and reached his own particular sanctum the mere slackness in work gives place to a great commotion. This is not merely due to the withdrawal of his presence. A fresh gust of rumour has struck the place. The intelligence has passed through the whole

place, one man, one native communicating it to another, ere it has penetrated into Fane's own room. But now one of the two commissioned officers under him comes hurrying into the room, and says hastily,—

“Good God, Fane, the mutineers have got into the city!”

“Oh! Ah! Hah!” says the Major quietly, looking up from his writing, and letting his eye-glass drop out of his eye. “How?”

“Through River Gate.”

“It had not been closed?”

“No.”

“That is stwange.”

“They say the sepoy guard let them in.”

“Oh, ah!—haw!”

“And the men of the new guard here belong to the same regiment.” The young officer himself was, like Major Fane, a “gunner.”

“So they do,” says Fane, as he quietly wipes his pen, a quill-pen, and passes it carefully through one of the holes in the cover of the little leaden receptacle, full of water, made for the purpose of standing quills in at this season of the year, in order to prevent their nibs from separating and curling up. “Who has brought the news?”

“Some drivers who have been down to the town.”

Fane has the men called, and questions them. They tell what they have seen and heard with excited volubility and at great length, but the sum and substance of it is that the mutineers from Abdoolapore have entered the city and been received into the palace. They heard the town-crier proclaiming that the Nuwâb had reassumed his ancient sovereignty; that obedience was to be rendered now to his commands alone, the rule of the English was over.

“Ha!” says Major Fane. “This puts a new feature on the outbreak.”

No wonder the young officer under Fane was disturbed at the news. It is disturbing. At this moment the

mastery of the Arsenal seems to lie with the sepoy guard at the gate. The physical force is with it. Besides the workmen engaged by the day or the job, the Arsenal has a regularly enrolled body of men, the classies. But these men are not trained soldiers; though accustomed to the handling of arms, they have not been taught the use of them. The mass of the *employés* were like the mob of clerks, wholly and solely an encumbrance. The Englishmen in the Arsenal were all trained and disciplined soldiers, picked and chosen men, all belonging to that famous corps, the Bengal Artillery, but of commissioned and non-commissioned officers there were only nine of them, all told. The young officer is thinking that if the mutineers appear at the gate this minute the guard there will most probably welcome them and admit them. (It would most probably have been so; the events of the coming months were to prove to what a great extent example is compulsive as well as contagious.) And what could nine Englishmen do against these?

Just as Fane has dismissed the drivers, one of the English "conductors of ordnance" comes in and says that the men in his yard have struck work, have refused to obey his orders, and have been very insolent to him, more especially the head foreman, a Mohammedan named Nubee Buksh.

"Haw!" says Major Fane. "Vewy well, Flannagan: I will come wound in a few minutes. Go back and tell the men so."

It soon seems as if their native establishment is likely to prove more than a mere encumbrance to them: to prove an active foe. And there are about four hundred of them, and nine Englishmen! And no sooner has Conductor Flannagan left the room than a little old man with a long flowing beard and a peculiarly gentle and deferential cast of countenance enters the room.

"*Kya hye?*" ("What is it?") asks Major Fane, somewhat sharply.

"Cherisher of the poor!" says the old man, with a sort of surprise and startled fearfulness—he has never

heard the Major Sahib speak so sharply, so quickly as that before ; whatever the import of his words, the tone of his voice has always been soft. " If forgiveness be granted me, I will speak ! "

" What is it ? Speak quickly. "

" I am a very old servant of the Great Company——"

" Yes. "

" I have now eaten its salt for nearly forty years. "

" Yes—well ? "

" And I have always served it faithfully. "

" What did you wish to speak to me about ? "

" And will serve it faithfully to the end. "

" Vewy well. But what have you got to say ? "

" This, " says the old man, glancing round the room ; " you must not trust any of the Mussulmans here. They are all against you, every one of them. "

" Ah ! How do you know ? "

" They think your sovereignty is over, and their own re-established. "

" Oh, ah ! Do they ? "

" Yes. "

" Do they say so ? "

" They are saying so. "

" If you hear any one say so again report him to me. You are keeping your men to their work ? "

" Yes. "

" Now you may go. "

As soon as the man has left the room, Fane gives certain directions to the young officer, and then resumes his interrupted work.

" They are sure to blame me for not trusting them, " he says to himself in the middle of signing his name to a number of documents.

The Government of India was extremely sensitive on two points—its land revenue and the fidelity of its native soldiery. All those in a position of authority towards sepoys, especially those commanding sepoy regiments, found themselves in a double difficulty. If they trusted their men and these mutinied, then they " came to grief ; "

if they distrusted them, and the men did not mutiny, then they were liable to "come to grief" also. To trust or not to trust, that was the difficult question of the time. This is what Fane is thinking of; but whether he is thinking of that or of the work on the desk before him, the one constant thought behind it all is the thought of his wife and children.

The documents before Fane do not seem to be of such an important character as to need to engage his attention at such a moment as this. They are mere ordinary returns; why delay over them when his presence is so urgently needed in the yards and workshops? Apparently he himself has a notion that he is wasting his time, for he keeps glancing at the watch he has placed on the table before him. But he continues sitting there until he has passed fully half an hour over those futile documents; but he will waste no more. He rises the moment the half-hour is past. That is the time he has allowed himself to remain quiet in his office. He puts on the huge uncouth pith helmet, which is so abhorrent to his soul, and goes outside. His orderly expands the huge umbrella, and Fane moves under its ample shade towards the City Gate. There are very few people about here; most of them are at work in the smaller enclosed yards, in the workshops, under cover. You descend to this gateway from the wide enclosure within it by means of a long stone-paved ramp which ran between high walls built to command and so defend it, and this long sloping ramp has, also for defensive purposes, a sharp turn in the middle of its length. At the top of the ramp Fane is met by a couple of sergeants, stalwart Irishmen, with big limbs and big hearts, a couple of picked men of his native establishment, and one of the commissioned officers, all of them, even the commissioned officer, carrying firearms. He now dispenses with the umbrella, and the little party goes down the ramp at a set, even pace. They see that the whole of the sepoy guard is still under arms and is clustered round the gateway. For some distance in from the gateway the ramp runs strictly between the high

smooth flanking walls. Fane stops at the beginning of this length and beckons to the native officer in charge of the guard to come up to him.

"It is necessary that you should march the guard to the Jumoo Gate and report yourself to Captain Hay. The men will pass out through the wicket, and you will form them in the road outside."

The native officer is a tall, well-built, handsome man. The regular, clear-cut features and the light complexion, as much as the caste mark on his forehead, indicate the Brahmin of high caste. His face wears the tribal look of priestly pride and self-complacency, and an individual one of boldness and insolence. He has saluted Fane with his drawn sword in a very off-hand sort of way.

"We are in charge of the gateway here," he says, "by the orders of the Brigadier as put in the order-book. It would not be proper for us to leave our post."

"I will take the responsibility of that. You are under my orders here."

"We should have an order from the officer of our regiment in charge of the city guards."

"You know who I am. My order is sufficient for you. It must be obeyed, and at once."

The man coolly surveys Fane from head to foot, such survey being in itself an insolence and a mark of insubordination. He sees a tall, commanding figure, a handsome, well-cut face, Brahmin as much as his own, with a quiet but very determined look upon it.

"It is incumbent on me to obey your orders," he says, "but the sepoys may not obey mine."

There is heard from among the sepoys the clinking sound of the loading of their muskets.

"They may refuse to move from here. How can you compel them to go?"

"In that way," says Major Fane quietly, pointing up the slope with the clouded cane, for the nice conduct of which he is so famous. At the top of the incline appear a couple of guns with their black muzzles pointing

straight down it ; by their side appear a couple of Englishmen with lighted port-fires in their hands.

“ If the sepoys are not outside the gate in five minutes after I have reached the guns I will fire at them. The guns are double-shotted with grape. Now go ! ” and Fane with his following moves up towards his pieces of ordnance. As he had pointed his cane and spoken there had come over the handsome countenance of the native officer—it was so light-coloured that it was more easy than it usually is to trace the play of emotion on it—the look of startled surprise and bafflement, and anger and dejection that there is on the face of a chess-player who, swelling with the pride and joy and triumph of having the game in his hands, suddenly hears the adversary cry “ Checkmate ! ” And the sepoy guard has begun to pour out through the open wicket like water, even before the officer has got down to it. The sight of the two guns was enough ; they had sent down their own message, and before the appointed five minutes is over not one of the dark-faced, red-coated, Eastern-bodied, Western-clad men is left within the place. Then Fane orders his men to move down to the gateway and close the wicket, and bolt and bar it securely. This is effected ; and then the young officer who has accompanied Fane breathes more freely than he has done for the past half-hour. That danger is over. Fane then mounts to the top of the river wall, and with a telescope he has brought with him searches the Abdoolapore road, through the glittering haze, through the quivering atmosphere, through the blinding glare, as far as his eye can follow it. But there is no marching column of English troops upon it.

“ Well, they ought to be here soon now,” says Fane, as he shuts up the telescope, and he remains on the wall discussing the situation of affairs with his young friend and subordinate. “ This 76th has been shaky for some years past. I think the 66th is to be depended on ; but even if it is not, the Brigadier ought to be able to hold his own with the Grenadiers and De Haviland’s battery.

The English troops from Abdoolapore should be here very soon."

The young officer has not been surprised at Fane going up to the top of the wall, but he is surprised at his lingering there ; he has expected him to hurry back to the yards and workshops in which disaffection has been reported. But Fane has his own purpose in that lingering. He has told the classies who had been employed in bringing out the guns and the ammunition to go back to their work. He thinks that the diffusion by them of the news of the expulsion of the sepoy guard and the closing of the wicket, of the fact that the only means of exit from the place is now commanded by a couple of guns, is likely to have as subduing an influence on the rest of the *employés* as his own presence. He could not go through the whole place at once ; and he wants as it were to lengthen out this operation at the gateway. It is now past eleven o'clock, and at twelve o'clock he can legitimately get rid of his establishment. However, after a little while he moves back to his office, and then gives certain orders to some of the upper members, native and European, of his staff. And now the twelve slow strokes and the twelve succeeding quick ones on the great gong above the main gateway of the palace have proclaimed the midday hour, and the most part of the establishment of the Arsenal is eager to be off, though there are not wanting many among the Mohammedans who willingly would have remained back—in possession of it.

But most of the men are very anxious to be out of the Arsenal for one thing, and back in their own houses for another. They have got ready to rush away the moment the clock has struck, but find they are not to be allowed to do this. Major Fane has given orders that they are to be taken down to the City Gate in batches and detachments. And it is with no pleasant feeling that the women-like Bengalee clerks, shuffling along in their loose transparent loin-cloths, descend the long ramp down which the two guns are pointing, and it is with a very delighted feeling that they pass through the wicket of the gateway,

and find themselves in the wide open road beyond. But now the whole of the establishment has been passed out, with the exception of about thirty men whom Fane has ordered to be kept back to help the Englishmen, for whom, of course, there is no leaving of the Arsenal just now. Great is the grumbling among the men so kept back. Why, this is the time for them to cook their bread ; they have had nothing to eat since this time yesterday ; they are very hungry ; this is great oppression—terrible tyranny. And so the moments slip by. An hour has passed, as the one single stroke on the great gong proclaims. And now a trusty *employé* whom Fane had sent out to obtain information of what is going on in the city comes back. The tale he has to tell, as soon as he can get breath to do so—he has run all the way from the town, he says—is very startling. He tells of the mutiny of the 66th, of the slaying of its officers, and that now that regiment, together with the mutinous regiment from Abdoolapore, and a large body of the Nuwâb's troops, is on its way to attack the Arsenal, the whole force being under the command of Rustum Khan, the Soubahdar Major of the regiment.

“ And they are bringing ladders with them, ladders from the palace.”

“ Hah ! those,” says Fane. He has seen them very often during the last few days. He went often to the palace to see Jack Kent, a brother artilleryman and an old Addiscombe chum. (He knows not that he is now dead.) He has now to arrange to meet this attack.

If the reader will draw two equal lines meeting at something less than a right angle, and from the ends of these draw two very short lines at right angles to them, and join the ends of those by a straight line, he will produce a figure which will nearly enough represent the outline of the Arsenal. The first two lines would represent portions of the main circumvallation of the town, the Arsenal being placed in the corner where the east and north walls of the city meet ; the other three would represent the inner walls which cut that corner off. The main, outer

city walls are mounted with guns : but the inner walls are purely enclosure walls, though of course much thicker than usual : their only defensive feature is a crenulated parapet : they mount no guns, have no moat. Supposing the reader were standing within the figure with his back to the angle, the gateway leading out into the city would be a little to the right of the angle formed by the meeting of the left-hand short line with the longer line joining the two shorter ones. A great portion of the space within the Arsenal was occupied by large, separate, enclosed yards, and as the gates leading into these are now closed and locked, the space within each of them is now withdrawn from the field contest : supposing the enemy to have mounted the outward walls, he could not easily descend from them into the yards, and if he did so he could not easily get out of them, the gates being locked from the outside. The field of action was in fact limited to the open space in front of the City Gate. A masonry ramp led down into this from the main circumvallation wall, on one side, and the inner, or enclosure wall, on the other. Thus, then, the enemy could gain access to this open space, in which stood the office buildings and the bomb-proof powder magazine, either by gaining the top of the wall by escalade and then descending by the ramps, or by forcing their way in at the gateway. The first thing to be done, then, is to prevent the enemy from mounting the wall or forcing the gate. But suppose they succeed in doing either, the last fight must be in this open space. Fane makes his dispositions accordingly. Close in front of the buildings, so as to prevent himself from being taken in the rear, he places six guns, most of them being 6-pounders, in such a manner as to bear on the ramps and the approach from the gateway, and a 24-pounder howitzer is placed so as to be able to play on any portion of the walls. The ammunition is brought out, and the guns at once double charged with grape. Fane himself is of opinion that the enemy will try and enter by the gateway, as it would not be very difficult for him to blow, or even burst, the wicket open ; and so he has a line of

chevaux-de-frise laid down in front of the guns he has placed specially to command the road leading in from it.

While these measures are being carried out a thought occurs to one of the men engaged in carrying them out—the same Michael Flannagan mentioned before. It occurs to him because his eye chances to rest on the bomb-proof roof of the powder magazine, half buried in the earth. His name and his speech of course at once bewrayed him, but even if you had not heard him speak you would have known at once that he was an Irishman. He had the national cast of feature, look, and carriage in the most unmistakable form. He steps up to Fane, and saluting him says,—

“Shure, sorr, ye will niver let them dirty bleaguards git hould of the place?”

“Not if we can help it, Flannagan. Certainly not.”

“But they nade niver git hould of it, sorr—or of moighty little of it!”

“What do you mean, Flannagan?”

“Shure, sorr, if we blow up the magazine there,” pointing towards the little row of domes, “there will be moighty little left for them to git hould of.”

“Oh! ah! Blow up the magazine. Hah! Vewy good ideeaw—certainly—yes.”

The main powder magazine of course stood without the walls of the city and at a good distance from them. But there was a large store of loose powder in this magazine too, and here was kept all the ammunition, both ball and blank, and here were stored the fuses, and rockets, and portfires, and the material for making them. There was plenty of explosive material in the place. And now the order is given, and the tops are taken off the casks and the powder turned out loose in great black heaps on the floor: the cartridges, ball and blank, are taken out of the boxes and cases and placed on the top of the powder, or in separate heaps and mounds: and the rockets and fuses and portfires are put together into heaps too: and then the train is laid and carried to a point a little way outside the building: it cannot be carried very

far. And so when Flannagan claims as the reward of his idea the privilege of carrying it out, should it be necessary, every one knows that the brave Irishman is claiming the reward of certain death ; at all events, for explosions are curious things, of almost certain death. He himself thinks that if he has to carry out the explosion there will be about as much left of him as of the powder barrels and the cartridge cases, and that Misthress Flannagan and the childre will niver see him again, niver no more.

Then Fane divides the natives he has kept in with him into two bands—one of which is to defend the gateway, the other the inner wall—and places one of his two commissioned officers in command of each. He then tells off the other Englishmen to the charge of the guns. And hardly has he made his arrangements—those for facilitating and making certain the explosion of the powder magazine had taken some time—before the enemy has appeared on the scene.

Fane receives a message that his presence is required at the gateway, and on getting there and mounting to the top of the wall by the side of it sees a horseman in the road beneath who carries a handkerchief in his hand. He recognizes the horse ; it is poor old Barnes's first charger, but not the rider : but his people soon tell him, with a curious intonation in their voices—the sight has impressed them very greatly, it appears to them a visible sign of the changed relations of the two races, the Englishman is now out of the saddle and the native in it—it is one of the native officers of Colonel Barnes's regiment, the Soubahdar Rustum Khan, they say. These natives all knew, too, that Rustum Khan at present occupied the position of the Sikunder Begum's paramour, and that added greatly to the effect produced on them by the sight of him in his present audacious position. Rustum Khan salutes Major Fane, not with a military salute, but with an easy graceful salaam, and then requests him to direct the gate to be opened so that the troops sent by his Highness the Nuwâb of Khizrabad for the purpose—and he waves the handkerchief towards the road leading

from the town on which he has left his following—may pass in and take possession of his Highness's ancient place of arms.

"If you do not go away from here at once I will order you to be fired at," says Fane; "for I look on you as a traitor, a deserter, a mutineer, and a thief."

Rustum Khan turns his horse and gallops away, followed by the two troopers attached to him as orderlies. A few hours ago he was trudging along in the dust on foot. And the moment he has begun to gallop back the foremost men of his column have made a rush at the wall. The open spaces of the ladder they carry glimmer high up in the air. Fane hurries towards the spot with the three other Englishmen he has with him. And the officer he has placed in charge of the body of natives allotted to the guarding of the wall is also hurrying with these men towards the same spot.

And now amid great shouts and cries the top of the ladder has been fixed a little below the top of the wall, and some men have begun to ascend it. And the English officer induces his men to fire a volley over the wall, but they are not accustomed to the use of firearms, nor is their hearts in the work, and the volley is a very innocuous one; but as those who have gone through such scenes know, the mere rattle and roar of musketry has its effect—the fear of being killed has a greater effect in a battle than the mere killing—and the cooler and better-directed fire of the Englishmen—Fane and the two other officers had also armed themselves with muskets—having dropped several of the assailants, these retire to the shelter of a hedge on the other side of the road which ran just below the Arsenal wall, and Fane orders the ladder to be hurled down. And now it is perceived that this attack was not made by the order of Rustum Khan. He is seen riding about and disposing his men carefully and methodically behind the shelter of the hedges and dwarf walls which run along the edge of the road. And Fane, recognizing that his trained intelligence may be the most dangerous force against them, orders him to be fired at; but he

continues to ride about uninjured and undiscomposed. But now Fane feels the want of any flanking defences. Had there been a bastion or salient in the middle of the straight run of wall he and the other Englishmen could from it have foiled any attempt at escalade on either side of it. And now Rustum Khan has placed his men, and they open fire on the whole length of the wall, and the fire of these trained soldiers is very different from the fire of the untrained *employés* of the Arsenal.

Sergeant Reilly is killed, and the young artillery officer commanding the party badly wounded ; but they must still fight on. And now from the gateways of two compounds on the other side of the road rush out two separate bodies of men, each carrying ladders, which they proceed to rear against the wall at two separate points. And the defenders are divided into two parties to meet these attacks, Fane leading one and the young officer the other. And as they reach the spots where the ladders are reared, a thought occurs to one of the classies, and mounting on to the parapet wall, he does not try to throw down the ladder whose top he has seized, as every one observing him from above or below fully expects him to do, but jumping on to it he goes scurrying down it as fast as he can, and his companions immediately follow his example—they have no desire to remain where they are, or to fight their fellow-countrymen. And now amid great shouts of praise and cries of welcome from those below, the men of both Fane's bands begin to swarm down both the ladders, and the men he had stationed at the gateway seeing what is happening, rush away from their post and join those at the nearest ladder, and the Englishmen cannot control or coerce those who so largely outnumber them, and they have to throw themselves together to prevent themselves from being overpowered singly in case their men, instead of merely deserting them, should become actively hostile, to which the sepoys from below are now loudly urging them. There is a short period of great confusion and disorder, and then there is nothing for the Englishmen to do but to get back to

the guns in the enclosure and there fight out the final fight.

They could of course have run down to the Water Gate and passed out through it on to the river and so got safely out of the place long before the sepoys had mounted the wall in any numbers. But the thought of this occurs to none of them—could not have been entertained if it had. Why, there are eight of them—enough to fight, too many to run away. And Fane and Frost and Smith, commissioned officers, and Hurley and Scully and Doolan and Flannagan, and Reilly (now lying dead on the wall above) and Cooper—these were the men who fought the great fight this day.

Fane tells off six men to the guns. And Michael Flannagan has taken his stand by the train, the setting fire to which is to be the last blow on their side in the fight.

“When I lift my hat,” says Fane.

It will take the sepoys some little time to mount the walls and make their way towards them, and that time is utilized in loading muskets and laying them down by the side of the guns for the use of those who are to cover the men appointed to fire and load the latter. And so the moments go by, their fierce heat unfelt. And now the sepoys come shouting along the top of the inner wall, and now they come pouring down the ramp to their easy victory, only eight men before them; and Fane watches them quietly, and then gives the word of command, and two guns send forth their deadly contents, and it is as if over the whole length of the ramp had been passed the sharp sickle of death. The rushing sepoys go down before it as the standing corn goes down before the sweep of the scythe. And men rush across the enclosure, even up towards the guns, and wave their arms, and fall to the ground, and lie there writhing in their agony. War is not a pretty thing. And the Englishmen ply the men on the wall with their muskets, and cause them to run back. The pieces having been reloaded, the Englishmen have again nothing to do but wait. And a good many of the

minutes so unexpectedly fraught with such momentous consequences go by, and their opponents have not appeared again.

Now the cause of this is seen. They have been making a circuit behind them. A party of sepoy now appears on the banquette of the wall on the other side of the enclosure, the outer, or river, or city wall, while another party appears again on the inner wall at the top of the fatal ramp. And both these parties fire down on the Englishmen, and the Englishmen return the fire, not only with their muskets, but with the howitzer, which is brought to bear with such effect on the men on the outer wall as to scatter them. And then it is loaded again—the natives themselves attribute our success in the battles against them greatly to our quickness in the loading and firing of our guns—and brought to bear on the party on the inner wall, and scatters it too. And then again two bodies of sepoy appear simultaneously on the two opposite walls, as if to distract the attention and divide the fire of the Englishmen; and as the howitzer sends its deadly hail across the top of the inner wall, the men on the opposite wall rush on and begin to descend the slope leading down from that wall to the enclosure, which said slope or ramp is open and free, and not encumbered with dead and wounded as the one on the opposite side is. But two pieces had been trained on this ramp, and they have been standing ready loaded for a long time, and now they are discharged, and though the men do not go down in a shock as they had before, a good many of them fall, and the rest go back. But now the Jemadar Rustum Khan himself appears upon this wall, and quietly makes observation of the placing of the guns below, while the Englishmen take shots at him.

What his orders are is soon seen. Rustum Khan does not mean to let them bring their superior engines of destruction, which have so greatly multiplied their numbers, into play against him in the same wholesale way. He directs his men to scatter themselves along the banquette, and lying down upon it to take steady separate

aim at the Englishmen. There are now only six of them. Frost, the young officer who had been so troubled at the news of the mutineers having got into the town, had been killed by a shot through the head, and Sergeant Hurley was killed on the occasion of the second rush. And of these six there is not a man, except Fane himself and Flannagan, who was sheltered by the powder magazine, who is not more or less badly wounded.

But still they continue to play on the wall with their howitzer and their muskets. And so the fight goes on. And the heat of the sun, of the air, is terrible, for it is now about three o'clock in the afternoon, the hottest time of the day. And now as Scully and Doolan, the two Irishmen who have done such splendid service in the loading and firing of the guns, both being tall, strong, powerful men, are standing by the muzzle of the howitzer, and about to reload, the bullets take them, and the sponging rod drops from the hand of the one, and the powder bag from the hand of the other, and one falls to the ground and the other reels back, and there is a shout from the walls; and then, as if they had risen out of the earth, at the edge where the level road across the enclosure and the steep incline leading down to the gateway meet, appears a line of red coats and dark faces—they had come in through the gateway which Rustum Khan had had opened—and then along the level roadway comes a swift rush for the guns.

The time has come. Fane quietly lifts his hat. The earth trembles, and the tall walls rock. The air is rent with the sound of the great explosion.

A sudden darkness takes the place of the brilliant sunshine. The clear transparent atmosphere is filled with flying fragments, fragments of iron and wood and masonry, charged with the white dust of the mortar of the shattered building, which hangs in it for a long while, and which represents the scoriæ of a volcanic eruption, to which the explosion bore so great a resemblance, the larger masses of the hurled-up masonry representing the cast-up rocks, to which they were not inferior in size. The larger and

heavier fragments of the shattered walls and roof of the powder magazine descend all around: some of the smaller fragments are carried to enormous distances. Rockets hiss and bullets ping through the air: there is the crash of falling buildings: the dull thud of the descending fragments of masonry striking the earth.

The office building is blown down; a long length of the Arsenal wall blown over. If the smaller fragments of the closely cemented brick and mortar were carried to long distances the bullets were carried farther still. Writing with reference to this, a native eye-witness and chronicler of the events of the day says, "It" (the explosion of the magazine) "did great damage to the adjacent houses, and killed about five hundred passengers walking in different streets. The bullets fell in the houses of people to such a degree that some children picked up two pounds, and some five pounds of it, from the yards of their houses." However that may be, many thousands of bullets were hurled into the air, for the explosion of the powder magazine, with its massive side walls half buried in the earth, and its massive circular roof, was also like the bursting of a huge shell; the magazine was very full of ball ammunition. Only a huge black cavern now remained to mark the place where the building had stood.

The assailants suffered severely. Many were killed by the direct shock and concussion of the explosion, many by the rockets and bullets, and by the fragments of masonry flying about. Many were crushed by the heavier masses of masonry in their descent; many who were gathered together on its top, or at its base, were killed by the blowing down of the long length of battlement near the magazine.

The survivors on the spot were conscious only of the sudden obscuring of the sun, and of the dark shadow which the huge dense cloud of smoke cast over them. Those who were observing the place of conflict from a distance saw a great pyramid of flame leap suddenly

high into the air, were stunned by the shock of the explosion, and then saw that a tall black column of smoke had taken the place of the flame—saw that this black shaft remained solid for some time, and then gradually widened out at the top until it looked like a gigantic mushroom.

CHAPTER XXV.¹

THE JUMOO GATE.

HAY hurries the party, Lilian in a daze of horror after the sudden sight of those ghastly upturned faces, away to his quarters. These officers' quarters had been built, for the sake of coolness, on the broad top of the outer battlement. They consisted of two small rooms, a bath-room, and a veranda which looked down on the enclosure below and on the city beyond. Hay hurriedly questions them about their escape ; hurriedly arranges for their comfort, as best he may in that limited space and that fiery time of the day ; hurriedly orders refreshments for them. He himself has to hasten back. He orders his servants to attend to them. " You must take possession of my bedroom too. There are only two chairs in this room, and it is hardly big enough to hold you all.—Here, Roshun, tell the man to pull the punkah in the bedroom also," and then he hurries away. With what laughing interest would the two sisters have regarded this incursion into Hay's bedroom at any other time ! With what eager interest would they have scanned its arrangements, so characteristic of him, even here, in their careful neatness ! But now Lilian, the quick-eyed, the observant, the chatterer, only seats herself on the side of the bed and buries her face in her hands. The thoughts of Beatrice, too, are more without than within, more with Hay than with his belongings ; but one thing her eye has noted—the Bible placed on the little table at the head of the bed. She softly lifts the book up. It is in moments of danger

such as these that people's hearts turn towards a higher protecting Power. She opens it as she stands, and her eyes fall on the first words of the 57th Psalm,—

“Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me ;
For my soul taketh refuge in thee :
Yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I take refuge,
Until these calamities be overpast.”

In the next room, the outer one, Mrs. Fane has quietly seated herself on a box. And then her attention is engaged by the childish mother and her mother-child. At that awful moment in the enclosure below, when Lilian had uncovered and laid bare the ghastly faces of the poor dead boys ; when Hay had hurriedly told them of what had happened ; when they had all turned their looks with fear and horror on the serried ranks of the sepoy, on the dark faces of the brethren of the men who had done this deed, Mrs. Lyster had plucked her daughter by the sleeve, and exclaimed, in tones of joyous eagerness, “Oh, how delightful it is to see the sepoy again ! I have not seen them drawn up like this for—for how many years, my dear ? ”

And now, when Hay's servant comes into this outer room and lays the table in order that he may supply these unexpected guests with such refreshments as he has on hand, the old lady says to her daughter,—

“I see, my dear, we have come to a luncheon party here. Do you know the last time I came to these quarters it was also to a party, but it was to an evening party. That mad fellow, Lucius Smith, who was in the Khelat-i-Ghilzies—his sister married Mr. Smith, ‘Cod’s-head Smith’ they used to call him, of the Civil Service (funny, two Smiths)—gave it when he was on duty here. We had iced champagne—he did not care what he spent. It was a beautiful moonlight night, and we sat outside on the walls, in a bastion, where a carpet was spread and chairs and tables laid out, and sang songs. I had brought my guitar. Dear me ! it seems a very long, long time ago. In what year could it have been—when the Khelat-i-Ghilzies were here ? Mr. Maxwell was the Commissioner,

and he had just got out a daughter who was at this party and who married Captain Torrens of that regiment—Captain Torrens, who—— But you are not listening, Mary.”

Through how many weary hours of how many weary days of how many weary years had those words fallen on Mary Lyster’s ears ! “ But you are not listening, Mary ! ” In how many varied tones of querulousness ! With what weary iteration ! How had they been as regular a part of each day as the morning, the noon, and the night !

“ Oh, yes, mother, I am,” says the daughter quickly.

“ Captain Torrens, who—— ” and then Mary Lyster is carried away from the living present into the dead past, as she has been every day for so many years—back into the company of those long-dead persons with whom she has had to live.

Mrs. Fane, having the mystery of Miss Lyster’s life thus laid bare before her—how the history of a lifetime may be summed up in a few words, perhaps in a single one !—is carried out of herself by reflecting upon it. The old life has eaten the young life up. Everything that lives lives by devouring something else. But here the thing devoured was so costly—the bloom and beauty of a young life. Had a broken and unfulfilled unmarried life been the lot of Miss Lyster, as it is of so many women, had the chance of love and marriage never come to her, the sacrifice would not have been so great ; but Mrs. Fane knew that they had, that she might have made her life full and complete, but she had voluntarily foregone the full knowledge and enjoyment of it ; she might have filled the cup of her life to the brim, but she had chosen rather to pour it out on the altar of filial piety. Mrs. Fane wonders as much as she admires. She herself could not have done this. To lay down her life, if needed, once for all, that she could have done ; but not thus to give it up piecemeal, bit by bit. There would have been no questioning on her part of the justice or injustice of the thing, whether it was right and fair that the young life should be sacrificed to the old one, whether the happiness

of two lives should be sacrificed for that of one; she simply could not have done it—it was not in her temperament.

Now they sit down to the table to partake of the refreshments Hay's servant has prepared for them. And if they find it difficult to eat because of what they have seen, because of the position they are in, they force themselves to eat in order that they may forget them. And Mrs. Lyster's substitution of the past for the present is at this moment a great boon, a source of comfort and not of annoyance. Nor is all her talk mere foolish babblement. The distress to her daughter lay in the constant repetition, the incessant flow. Her mind was stronger at some times than at others. She and Mrs. Fane knew a great many of the same places and the same people, and have a great deal to talk about. And if Mrs. Lyster's garrulousness displays itself even now, if the mention of every fresh name is like the opening of a sluice, like the striking of the rock by Moses, it helps to pass away the time, so that when they rise from the table it is after two o'clock. And now they are left by themselves again, and there is no sound but the creaking of the punkah within and the moaning of the fiery blast without, and Mrs. Lyster's talk, until the old lady, leaning up against her daughter, falls asleep in the middle of a sentence. The daughter tenderly supports her, and looks down on her as if she were a little child. It is a touching sight. And so the moments pass by, as they do whether they be joy-laden or sorrow-fraught.

Colonel Grey had been sent down to the Jumoo Gate with three companies of his men, the Grenadiers, and a couple of guns. He had found that the 66th had mutinied and marched off to the city. He could do nothing more than hold the gateway, all he had orders to do. He had sent information of what had happened to the Brigadier. The bodies of the dead officers had been brought in from the road where they fell. Then came a period of waiting. And now in the wide enclosure of the Jumoo Gate are drawn up the men of the 76th who form the guard there,

the company of the 66th, the three companies of the Grenadiers, and four guns, 6-pounders. Most of the officers sitting or standing still there, in the midst of the terrible heat, had fallen into a sort of dreamy unconsciousness, when they were aroused from it by the rattle of musketry. It comes from the city. What can it mean? Can it be the English troops from Abdoolapore? Colonel Grey sends a man out to discover. He returns to report that the mutineers are attacking the Arsenal. There is plenty of excitement now—among the Englishmen of one kind, among the natives of another.

Mrs. Fane had fallen to thinking of her husband. Of course he will have to remain on in the Arsenal. What is likely to happen there? The wind is moaning and sighing round the little building with a measured rise and fall. The distant rattle of musketry—what can it be? The English troops from Abdoolapore? Every one's thoughts ran in that direction. But surely that firing is near—within the town itself; no, it is far away, without it; no, it is near; and then, listening attentively, Mrs. Fane becomes convinced that it is stationary, and near, within the town, its apparent difference in position and varying intensity due to the rise and fall of the wind which is blowing toward it. Then as she listens a thought arises within her to which the sound of the firing of heavy guns seems to her to lend undoubted confirmation. She rises from her chair and goes out into the veranda, careless of the frightful heat there. Yes; it is even as she thought. The firing is at the Arsenal; she knows the position of it well. She hurries back into the room, and going up to the door of the bedroom whither the girls have retired again, she calls out to them, "They are attacking the magazine." And the burning pavement beneath her feet, and the fiery, blinding, blistering sunlight, and the hot wind are forgotten as the mother and daughters stand with their eyes fixed on the spot where the husband and father is defending his post, and is at this moment, at this next moment, now, in deadly peril of his life.

Hay comes hurrying up to give them the information,

but sees that they know it, and he stands there for a short time with his eyes, too, fixed on the spot from which the heavy clouds of smoke are drifting away, and where the rapid firing of the heavy guns, even more than the continued rattle of the musketry, tells how hot the fight is : and then he has to hurry down again. And the mother and daughters continue to gaze at those clouds of smoke, to listen to the terrible music of war, with fearful, absorbed, fixed attention. And then they feel a sudden shock, and the air is rent with a terrible noise, and the tall wall trembles under them. A sudden, deep, appalling silence succeeds. And now in the place of the separate, drifting, dun-coloured smoke clouds stands one tall, black, solid column of smoke. "The magazine has blown up!" says Mrs. Fane in a strange set voice, as if when standing on a rock and looking at the vessel which carries all you love struggling amid the seething waves, she suddenly disappears and you exclaim, "She has sunk—the vessel has sunk!" And then, in a high voice, in which sorrow and exultation are strangely blended, she calls out, "He has blown it up himself. Your father has blown up the magazine to prevent it from being taken. I know it."

The two girls gaze at that black monumental column with an overpowering sensation of awe, which leaves no room for any other feeling : regret and sorrow and pride must come hereafter. Then Mrs. Fane can bear the sight no longer, and turns round and rushes into the house and into the inner room, and her daughters follow her. And in the enclosure below the sound of the explosion has caused a great commotion among the white-faced officers and their dark-faced men. The sepoys of the 66th break their ranks and huddle into a crowd, and it is only by pointing to the guns that the English officers can get their words of command obeyed ; and when some men who have been near the magazine are admitted into the enclosure and make the exaggerated statement that the whole of their regiment has been blown away by the explosion, the men of this remaining company openly curse those who have thus destroyed their brethren.

Many European fugitives—men, women, and children—are now gathered together in the enclosure. The arrival of each party is the source of fresh excitement, for many have terrible tales to tell. Parents arrive without their children, children without their parents. Women rush in panting, breathless, mad with terror, covered with dust, with torn clothing and dishevelled hair, wounded and bleeding. Dying people are brought in and laid down to die. The work of murder and plunder is now very active in the English quarter. Then an order comes from the Brigadier to send back two of the guns to the cantonment, and they are dispatched; and then they come back again, without the English officer: they had met a party of the Nuwâb's troops, who had treacherously shot him, and then the native artillerymen had retreated with the guns. And so the time passes by.

The sun is now far down on his declining course, and the wind which has risen with his rise is now falling with his fall. The western battlement is beginning to cast a broad shadow upon the level enclosure. And now comes an order from the Brigadier that Colonel Grey is to join him on the ridge with all the troops and guns now at the gateway here. Colonel Grey does not like this: he does not like to withdraw from the Jumoo Gate; he knows that it means the abandonment of the city. But the order is peremptory; the officer who brings it informs Grey that the Brigadier is apprehensive for the safety of the crowd of English women and children whose charge has weighed upon him so heavily all that day, as the sepoys with him have begun to show an open spirit of disaffection. Grey prepares, therefore, to march up to the ridge at once. He has, of course, to take all the English folks with him. As many of the English women and children, and wounded Englishmen, as can be accommodated that way are to be taken on the gun-carriages. Hay hurries up and brings down the party from his quarters. Colonel Grey's own Grenadiers being nearest the outer or cantonment-ward gateway, he marches them out first. They have got through the gateway and across the drawbridge, and a

little way beyond it. The men of the 66th are to follow. But these seize and close the gates. And then a scene of indescribable confusion ensues within the enclosure. The sepoy there fire at their officers, rush on the guns. The guns are not ready for action : they have been limbered up preparatory to moving away ; the artillerymen are taken unawares ; the two English officers in charge of the guns are both shot down : they had not been prepared for such an attack, had just given the order to march. And now the men of the 76th, Hay's men, join with those of the 66th, who have executed this clever stroke, and the sepoy are masters of the gateway, and through the enclosure rings the cry of, "Slay the Feringhees ! Slay the Feringhees !"

When they had descended from the officers' quarters Mrs. Lyster and her daughter and Mrs. Fane and Beatrice had been placed together on two gun-carriages, while Captain Tucker, who was arranging for the conveyance of the women from the place, had conducted Lilian to a third one, and placed her in one of its seats. The seat on the other side was occupied by a wounded commissariat sergeant. As Mrs. Fane takes her seat by the side of the gun her heavy burden of sorrow for the loss of her husband is lightened for the moment by the thought that her daughters are about to pass out of the horrid doomed circuit of the city walls. Then comes the sudden, confusing, dazing horror and surprise of this most unexpected outbreak of the sepoy. Their ears are filled with dreadful cries, their eyes see terrible sights. And then those four find themselves standing together again, they know not how—it seems as if they had come through some confused dream of horror, some horrible nightmare—in the open space at the foot of the ramp leading up to the officers' quarters which they have just descended. This corner of the enclosure is quite empty ; the sepoy have all compacted themselves into the space between the two gateways on the opposite side. There the sepoy have thrown themselves upon the guns from which the ladies have just rushed away ; there they are busy slaying the

English "dogs." They all find themselves standing together again, William Hay as well as Mrs. Lyster and her daughter, and Mrs. Fane and Beatrice. The excellence of Hay's character had now stood him in good stead : he had always been just and kindly in his dealings with his men, never harsh, or cruel, or unjust, and now they had refrained from hurting him. But where is Lilian ? They look with eager, fearful eyes towards the seething crowd from which come forth shrieks of agony and fear, shouts of hellish triumph, and Hay is just about to rush toward it to seek for her, when Lilian's slight, childish figure emerges from the edge of the mass of men, and she rushes toward them with her garments streaming far behind her.

She has gone through the most here. When the sepoy of the 66th had rushed at the gun on which she was seated, one of them had raised his musket and put its muzzle to her temple preparatory to shooting her through the head : actually applied it to her temple—to the saving of her life ; for the fearful touch of it sent her tumbling headlong off the seat, and she being now out of the way, the sepoy fired the bullet intended for her through the head of the poor wounded sergeant beyond. She had then scrambled up and rushed forward, and been thrown down again, either by a blow or a collision, and trampled upon—she the slender, delicate girl. She had jumped up again, half choked and blinded by the dust which was now rising thick under the scuffling feet. She had darted forward straight before her, and given a joyful cry when she saw Captain Tucker close in front of her, saw him looming high above the crowd : he was a very tall, thin man, and rode a very lean, tall horse—the combination was one of the jokes of the station. Lilian has often ridden by his side, as she has often danced with him, knows him very well. She was making her way toward him, when a sudden swaying of the crowd had opened out a clear space between them ; she had been about to shout to him to attract his attention—she was behind the horse, the rider had his back to her—about to rush forward across the open space and get to his

stirrup, when Captain Tucker threw up his arms and fell from the saddle, rolled along the ground right up to her feet, and stretched himself out there dead. She leaped mechanically over the body and rushed forward again. Then she saw her mother and sister, and Hay rushing forward had met her.

The white dresses of the ladies catch the eye, so they are soon joined by some other English people, among whom is Dr. Brodie, Lilian Fane's aged lover.

"Up to my quarters again," cried Hay. "We must get on to the wall. It is our only chance."

They begin to move up the ramp, to run up it as fast as they can. The movement is observed. The sepoy's send a volley after them, and many fall never to rise again. Hay falls, but he jumps up so quickly that Beatrice, by whose side he is running, thinks that he has only stumbled. But when they have reached the front of the little house and stopped she sees how pale he is, observes a curious look on his face, the look that is on the face of every man the first time he is wounded, and exclaims, "What is the matter, William?"

"I am hit."

"Hit?"

"Yes; in the arm," and as he lifts his left arm, she sees the blood come trickling from under the sleeve of his jacket and across the back of his hand.

"O William! Wounded! O William! Oh!" cries Beatrice distractedly, wringing her hands.—"O mother!"

"What is it, Beatrice?" cries Mrs. Fane anxiously, as she comes hurrying up. "You are not hurt?"

"No—no—but William. He is wounded."

"Dr. Brodie, come here! Mr. Hay is wounded," says Mrs. Fane, her usual commanding mode of speech rendered more abrupt by her distressed condition of mind.

"Are ye hurt, mon? Where are ye hurt, mon? Come, tell us quick, mon. The sepoy's will be after us soon," cries old Brodie hurriedly.

"The left arm," says Hay faintly, because he has not yet recovered from the shock of the blow, and also because

he has a fear that he may lose his arm ; a gunshot wound is apt to be staggering, especially the first time.

Brodie hastily removes the uniform jacket, and rolling up the bloody shirt-sleeve, at sight of which Beatrice shudders, looks at the wound.

"A bad, a vera bad wound. But the bone is not broken. That is vera fortunate. We could na have stayed here setting a bone, when the sepoys may be up here any minute."

That speech arouses Hay, and makes him forget his hurt.

"Yes, we must not remain here—never mind me," he says.

"Some water—quick !" cries old Brodie aloud, and then as it were to himself, "It will na be vera long before the sepoys are up here."

Beatrice flies into the room and comes back with a water-vessel.

"Give me his handkerchief out of his pocket. I will apply a tourniquet."

Beatrice, gazing with deep sorrow and pity at Hay's face, sees from the expression of it what terrible pain he is suffering—it is curious how the face will display the emotions, even against the will—but still he keeps saying, "Quick, Brodie, quick—we must not remain here any longer."

It is obvious that they are under observation of the sepoys below, for bullets continually strike the face of the building or go pinging over their heads : and now they hear a curious singing noise among them, and a round shot strikes one of the pillars of the veranda with a terrible crash. They rush away from the house along the wall until they come to a large circular bastion, the same in which Mrs. Lyster had twanged her guitar on a moonlight night so many years before, and which she is now revisiting under such very different circumstances. Within the ample round of this they are withdrawn from the observation of the sepoys below, and stop to hold a hurried consultation. They can run along the top of the wall,

but if they are pursued they must be taken. And then they will be within the city still.

"That is our only way of escape," cries a young officer who has joined them, pointing down the wall. "And I will jump over sooner than let those mutinous scoundrels kill me."

"It is certain death," says Hay, looking down the giddy height. "If we only had a rope! Why should we not get a rope—make a rope? I have some long pugarees and cummerbunds—there are the punkah ropes."

"We have na time for a' that," cries old Brodie impatiently. "The sepoys——"

But Hay has rushed to his quarters, and soon comes rushing back. The punkah ropes are long: they and the cummerbunds and pugarees are soon knotted together. The improvised rope reaches well to the foot of the wall. But now arises a curious question. Who is to be let down first? It is a dubious privilege, for the person let down first would put the power of the knots to hold, of the rope to bear, to the test. If it gives way high up the fall will mean certain death, an immediate or a lingering death. It is a strange dilemma. It was not magnanimous, in the momentary expectation of the arrival of the sepoys, to wish to be the first to leave the place, and yet it was magnanimous to wish to be the first to test the rope.

Dr. Brodie was old and rich, and I do not think he cared to be the first to put the capability of the rope to trial: in fact his thought was that Mrs. Lyster should be put to use for the purpose. The young officer—his name was Hamilton—was ready enough to go down first: "But I should not be able to come up again," he says. He was stout and heavy. All the men were wanted above in order to lower the ladies, who could not slip down the rope as the men could. They would have to be slung on to it. The mothers would have liked their daughters, the daughters their mothers, to be the first out of the place, but they did not wish them to be the first to make trial of the rope. Miss Lyster would have been ready enough to make the experiment, but she is haunted by the thought

that her mother may refuse to descend at all ; how terrible it would be for her to be at the foot of the wall unable to re-ascend, while her mother was at the top refusing to descend ! No one likes to propose anything with regard to any one else. Hay had a difficulty similar to that of Hamilton. " I used to be a good hand at this sort of thing, but I am afraid that I may not be able to come up again with this wounded arm."

" Let me down first," says Beatrice. " I am the heaviest"—meaning of the women—" and if the rope bears me it will bear any one else."

" No, no," cries Hay. " I used to be very good at going up or down a rope ; my arm shall not prevent me from coming up again."

He slips over the edge of the wall—Beatrice turns her face away from the giddy height with a shudder—how her heart trembles within her—how it leaps for joy when young Hamilton cries out, " He has reached the ground"—how it is again filled with apprehension as Hay is re-ascending the rope—what joy, what relief, when he is standing once more in the midst of them ! " It is all right," he says. " And now we will send Lilian down first. There is no time to be lost." Lilian is lowered safely, and then Beatrice, and then Mrs. Fane. Now comes Mrs. Lyster's turn, and her daughter's heart stands still. An immovable obstinacy is part of the old lady's disease ; arguments only serve to weld her determination. If she says she will not descend the wall, nothing will make her ; if they speak harshly to her it may throw her into a fit. Great is the power of infirmity. What fancy may not enter into her poor weak brain at this moment ! Luckily it is one that makes her ready and eager to be lowered. As they are putting the rope under her arms she laughs. " This is very amusing," she says. " You remember that song, Mary, ' When a lady elopes down a ladder of ropes,' " and they launch her into the air. Then the men slip down, Hay coming down last. How the hearts of the women beat with joy as they find themselves standing safe and sound at the

foot of the wall : beat with a double joy at the thought of having got out of the city, and of having got safely down the wall ! The being launched into the air at that giddy height, the being lowered down with the thought that the rope might give way any moment, had not been a pleasant experience. They shudder as they gaze up at the height of the wall, as they had shuddered when they had looked down it. They are out of the city : delightful and wonderful fact ! They are not yet out of danger, they are within easy shot of any one on the top of the wall. But they have only the ditch to get across, and then the open land lies before them. They have soon slid down the escarp, the inner slope of the moat ; they have soon run across the dry bottom ; they have soon reached the foot of the outer slope, the counterscarp, and have only to get up it. They find they cannot manage this, try as hard as they may ; and they try very hard, for the sepoys may at any moment appear on the top of the wall and fire down on them.

As already noted, the sides of the ditch had a very steep incline, and the fierce sunshine has baked them dry, and it and the fiery gales have reduced the herbage on the slope to a short dry stubble, thus making it very slippery. They can maintain no foothold on it, there is no softness in it, nothing to catch or grasp. They go up a little way and then slip down again. The men make furious rushes at it ; they get a long way up ; they get almost to the top ; and then they come down again. Here was a most unexpected, a most maddening stoppage. And the sepoys may appear on the top of the wall, in the bastion, at any moment. Of those of the party who survived to look back on the events of this day there were many who thought the worst moments during it had been those in which they had tried ineffectually to climb the side of the ditch. But now Hay makes a desperate rush at the slope and manages to get almost to the top, then throwing himself forward, he gets his hand on the hard edge, and sustains himself, and then draws himself up. The improvised rope has of course been left dangling from the

wall. But he lets down his sash, and Hamilton has dug a foothold in the declivity as high as he can reach with the point of his sword ; and so, what between pushing and pulling—how they would have laughed at any other time ! (but it was no laughing matter now, when they expected that at any moment a shot from the wall might lay them dead or wounded in the bottom of the ditch)—the ladies are got up the slope at last, and they hurry away from the horrid declivity as fast as they can. The sun has sunk, but the air is still full of the bright after-glow.

CHAPTER XXVI.

OUT OF THE JAWS OF DEATH.

THEY hurry across the open ground that lies between the edge of the ditch and a road which here runs almost parallel to the battlement from which they have just descended. If they follow this road in one direction, it will bring them to the cantonment by way of the Mall; if they follow it in the other, it will also conduct them to the cantonment, but by a more circuitous and unfrequented route. The unfrequentedness is a greater recommendation than the circuitousness is a drawback. So they turn their faces to the northward, and not to the southward, and hurry along. Strange to think that they should be hurrying fearfully along a road over which many of them had moved that morning, in lordly leisure, with as little thought of danger as if they had been in Rotten Row. But they meet no one on the road except a few boys and girls, who gaze curiously at them. And now the Gothic turrets of Melvil Hall, which lies upon this road, come in view above the tops of the trees. The women look eagerly towards the house as towards a place of refuge and safety. Mrs. Fane has been walking with Mrs. Lyster, and the latter has been prattling away, when she stops suddenly in the middle of a sentence, and Mrs. Fane, turning towards her, sees a strange look come over her face, hears a strange gurgle from her lips, and then the poor old lady drops down on the road in a fit.

Mrs. Fane calls out; Miss Lyster runs back to her mother. At this very moment a man comes out from

the wicket of a little garden by the side of the road, and says,—

“Look! You must run into my orchard. Many people are advancing up that lane”—pointing to one that entered the road just at the corner of the orchard—“and if you fall into their hands they will kill you. They have killed some English people in this neighbourhood, and plundered their houses.”

“Lift her up, Hay,” says Dr. Brodie, who has been bending over the afflicted woman; and he and Hay lift her up and carry her a few yards easily enough, she is so light; but then comes a sudden fierce convulsion, and they cannot hold her, and have to lay her down again on the road.

“You must leave her here,” cries the native, the owner of the orchard.

But they cannot do that. Again they lift her up and carry her a few yards, and again comes the fierce unnatural exertion of strength, still in the East attributed to demoniacal agency, which they cannot cope with. She twists herself out of their hands. And now they can hear the shouts and cries of the approaching crowd of natives—hear their laughter. Its murdering and plundering have made it merry. (Laughter is said to be due to a sudden sense of superiority; certainly nothing arouses that sense of superiority so greatly as slaying a man and taking possession of his goods.) It is a terrible moment.

“Grip her tight, mon,” cries Dr. Brodie excitedly; and he and Hay lift her up, though with great difficulty, and with great difficulty have carried her a few yards further on, when the terrible struggling suddenly ceases, and she becomes quite still; an utter relaxation takes the place of the former rigidity; the fiercely thrown-about arms drop down straight; and the difficulty they have in carrying her now is not due to the over-activity of the frame, but to its utter inertness, to its sheer, dead, downward weight—the terrible weight of lifelessness.

“She is dead,” says Brodie. “They often die in a fit

like this ;” and they lay her down at the foot of the tree they are passing under.

“O mother ! mother !” cries Miss Lyster, flinging herself down on her knees by the side of the body, and wringing her clasped hands. “Oh ! she is not dead.”

“As good as,” says the doctor. “Get up, Miss Lyster ; you can do her no good now.” And he takes the kneeling woman by the arm, but she refuses to rise.

“I cannot leave her ! I cannot !” she cries.

The loud “Hye, hye’s !” and “Ha, ha’s !” of the crowd now fall terribly on their ears.

“You cannot remain here,” says old Brodie roughly. “You are endangering your own life and ours”—and seizing her by the arm, he pulls her up by main force ; he was a tall, powerful Scotchman, with a gaunt, bony frame. After all, it is hard to be killed when you have made a large fortune, and are just about to return to your native land with it. And the orchard wicket is so close. “Take her other arm,” he cries to young Hamilton, who is standing near, and he seizing her other arm, they run her between them up to the wicket, and pass in through it.

And now they can hear the tramp of the advancing crowd as it comes nearer, along the lane. Every one has passed in through the wicket, which is very narrow, and only admits one person at a time, and the gardener is about to close it when Miss Lyster slips by him and runs back to the place where her mother is lying.

Hay jumps forward to go after her, but the gardener has closed and bolted the wicket.

“Open it !” says Hay.

“What for ? What profit will it be your going after her ? You cannot do her any good—not if all three of you gentlemen went after her. You would all three be killed. That is all.”

“I must bring her back. Open the door !” cries Hay passionately, and trying to move the man aside.

“Speak low ! Be silent !” cries the native ; and Lilian, with her nerves outworn by the terrible events,

the terrible sights and sounds, the terrible apprehensions of that day, gives a jump, and even firm-hearted Mrs. Fane starts violently as there is a sudden roar from the crowd, evidently at sight of the two women in the road.

The hellish rushing crowd is now within a few yards of themselves—is separated from them only by a couple of rows of fruit-trees and the cactus hedge encompassing the orchard.

“You could not get near them now: the crowd is round them.” His listeners shudder. “You are only endangering the lives of these other women too,” says the gardener, as Hay again puts his hand on his shoulder, as if to thrust him aside. “If you stand here any longer you will all be killed. They will be sure to come to the wicket, and there would be no difficulty in their bursting it open. Come behind me—quick!”

“Give me your arm, William,” cries Beatrice, claiming for his sake that help she would not have claimed for her own.

Then, as they run swiftly along the walk which runs down the middle of the orchard, the gardener says,—

“You must get out of the garden as soon as you can. Those children of Satan will be sure to make search for you. They will be sure to think that those other two ladies would not have been by themselves.” He leads them to the gate at the opposite end of the garden. They are in the lane the crowd has passed up. “Now run,” says the friendly owner of the orchard, which has been of such use to them.

“We will not forget what you have done for us,” says Hay, as they move quickly away.

To their delight they find that the lane brings them to the widespread grounds of Melvil Hall, though on the opposite side to that to which the highroad—that now terrible highroad—would have conducted them.

“If I find you can remain here safely, I will go back and see what has become of her,” says Hay, as they pass in at the gateway. “I must go back, or I should never have a happy day in my life again.”

"Oh! this is terrible!" cries Beatrice, clinging to his arm.

They pass along under the beautiful avenue, some of the trees in which are casting a sweet fragrance into the air. How delightfully cool and fresh that air is now! They are walking up the slight acclivity on the crest of which the mansion stands, when the gardener enters the avenue from a side path, and seeing them, utters an exclamation and stops them.

"You must not go up to the front of the house," he says; "there are many people, people of all sorts, standing there. Follow me."

He brings them to the line of lower rooms which had been built up from the front of the declivity in order to form a terrace in front of the side of the house which faced it. One of these rooms is used as a billiard-room. Into this he leads them. "I will go and fetch the khansaman-jee" (the "Sir Butler"), he says.

When that venerable servitor, who has passed the whole of his life—all but the first fourteen years of it—in the service of the Melvil family, enters the room, he is in a state of terrible agitation.

"What a twirl of the world is this!" exclaims the old man, as he makes them the profound yet graceful and dignified salaam which has been one of his accomplishments. "My master, Melvil Sahib, the Commissioner Sahib, a prisoner!"

"A prisoner!" cries Hay.

"Yes, my master, the Commissioner Sahib, Melvil Sahib, a prisoner! Who could have thought such a thing possible?"

"Where?"

"In the palace of the Nuwâb. And here are people coming to plunder this house—the Commissioner's house—Mr. Melvil's house—the house in which I have lived for over forty years. They are coming now—a great crowd of people."

"It must be the same crowd," says Hay, looking round at the others.

"And some of the servants are proving unfaithful to their salt. The coachman says that he will take the big carriage with the pair of horses belonging to it. He says it is his right."

"We want something to eat and drink," cries Hay, interrupting him.

"But you cannot remain here, sir. They have been killing all the English people. What a turn of the world is this! And they will kill you too if they find you here."

"They have not arrived yet?"

"No; but they are not very far off."

"Well, bring us down something to eat and drink at once. We must have something—the ladies are faint. Bring us plenty of cold water," says Hay.

"And some beer," says Hamilton. "I suppose you have some cooled?"

"Plenty."

"Quick, then—quick!"

After a while the old man returns, accompanied by a khidmutgar (literally "serving-man"), and they carry two big trays, on which are cold meat and bread and butter and biscuits, and other eatables, and they bring down several bottles of iced water and several bottles of iced beer. How delicious is the fragrance of the latter as the old man draws the corks! We have drunk many a tankard of cool ale in this our native land with sensations of great delight, but the drinking of a glass of Bass's pale ale, iced, in India in the hot weather, is an orgasm! How it diffuses itself through you! How it revives and reinvigorates you! It would produce a soul under the ribs of death. The clean, wholesome, hoppy perfume! What bouquet of what wine ever equalled it? And as you hold the glass lovingly up before you, what ruby or purple of what wine ever equalled that amber tint? The "beaded bubbles winking at the brim" of a glass of champagne, what are they compared to that tender froth? Many of our poets have celebrated the praises of this our national drink; to what a height would their strains have risen had they ever enjoyed a glass of it at

the end of a long hot day in India ! Old Brodie insists that the ladies too shall partake of the refreshing, strengthening, tonic draught. And they eat and drink very quickly, for they are very hungry and very thirsty ; they eat and drink very quickly, for the old khansaman earnestly urges them to do so.

“ Very different meal this from the last one we had here,” says Hamilton, speaking, as clearly as he can with his mouth so full, to Lilian. A very good meal in its way, but still very different. In place of the blaze of the innumerable candles, the flickering of a single common oil lamp ; in place of the dainty and magnificent appointments of the table, nothing at all, their plates on their knees, their glasses on the billiard-table ; in place of the long rows of guests with their bright, proud, happy, cheerful faces, their bright uniforms, their dainty fresh white evening dresses, *they*, with their dirty, grimy hands and faces, with their dust-filled hair and their bedraggled garments, which clung so clammily about them, with their sorrowful, anxious faces. The changed condition of their clothing they can see and feel ; the changed condition of their faces they can see mirrored in the faces of those around them. But now the old khansaman is very urgent with them to be gone.

“ We had better take the advice of the immortal Captain Dalgetty, and lay in provender while we can,” says Hay, and he takes another glass of beer, swallows it at a gulp, and puts some bread and cold meat into his pockets. They move with quick feet across the lawn, where so few nights before their footsteps had been hurried only by the music. They steal anxiously along the walks over which they had wandered in such perfect security and high delight, without any thought of danger, on that festive occasion which was so recent to them this morning, and seems so far away to them now. The night has come, and the long avenues, then so brightly lighted, are now dark to the eye as well as to the heart. But they welcome that darkness, for the yells and shouts proclaim that the marauders have reached the Hall and

begun the work of plunder—have asserted their dominion over the place. They quicken their already by no means tardy footsteps.

“They have begun to loot the house,” cries the old khansaman, with quavering voice. “They will break all the things in it—the beautiful things—the china and glass, of which I have had charge for over thirty years now. It is for so long a period as that that I have been khansaman here.” That eleventh of May was a distressful day to many different people in many different ways.

They have arrived at the gateway on the west, or cantonmentward, side of the grounds. This places them once more on the road they had parted from so short a time before, under circumstances on which none of them dare look back. The brief, bright afterglow has faded away and left the world quite dark. It is inky black under the avenues of umbrageous trees, with interlacing boughs, which border the road on either hand. As the fugitives move along in the soothing coolness and sheltering darkness of one of these avenues each one of them falls into a reverie. A dead silence reigns around them; they are not disturbed by the present, so they begin to recall the past, and to forecast the future, the future on which the immediate past must have so great an influence. (Strange that the mind should derive so much misery from the past which is dead and the future which has no existence! How lucky it is that the flesh does not remember or forebode—that our bodily pains are of to-day and not of yesterday or to-morrow; that the tooth does not ache in remembrance or by anticipation.) Old Dr. Brodie broods over the plunder of the bank, which may mean so great a loss to him. William Hay is reflecting with bitterness on the mutiny of his men. The tears run silently down her cheeks, flowing now for the first time, as Mrs. Fane mourns for her husband, notwithstanding the glorious manner of his death. What is she to do now? The thought is a perfectly legitimate one, and Mrs. Fane entertains it as much for the sake of her children as her own. But it is curious how much our concern for others,

even those nearest and dearest to us, is connected rather with ourselves than with them. David did not mourn for the lost man Jonathan, but for his lost friend Jonathan. And Beatrice is mourning for her father, the noble and the kindly, if also the affected, of whom she was so fond and proud. And she mourns for her wedding-dress. There was no want of feeling, no defect of filial piety in this. The big things of the next world and the small things of this, the eternal verities and the small everyday verities, stand together in dramatic juxtaposition. You may mourn deeply for the father or mother, daughter or son, brother or sister, who died last night, but you must brush your hair this morning, see to its parting. Lilian, too, mourns for her father, whom she so greatly loved and admired, and the ghastly face of poor dead Tommy Walton rises up before her. They are startled from their reveries by a voice crying out of the darkness, "*Koun log ?*" ("What people?")

"Who are you?" Hay calls in return.

"That is enough—you are Feringhees. Do not go on to the cantonment."

"Why not?"

"It is in possession of the sepoys. The English people have fled from it. The evil-livers of the city have all gone out of it to plunder it."

"But who are you?"

"What does it matter? *Bunda Khoda*" ("Servant of God"—the usual signature to anonymous documents), "do not go on to the cantonment if you wish to preserve your lives. You had better get down into the low lands of the Jumna. Turn into the first road leading to the right; that will take you down to it."

"Come and let us see who you are. Come and show us the way."

But there is no answer. They have seen no one; that is not to be wondered at, the darkness is so thick; they have heard no footsteps; the man might have been squatted down somewhere, might have sped away noiselessly on his naked feet. At all events, the voice came

out of the darkness and has vanished away into the darkness. They hear it no more.

As they move onward they discuss what they have heard, almost determine not to go on to the cantonment, and keep a sharp look-out for the road to the right. And now they have arrived at the channel which relieves the main canal, from which the water-courses running into the town are supplied, of its surplus water and carries it off to the Jumna. They cannot forego the chance of enjoying the delight of washing their hands and faces. Before crossing the bridge that spans the stream they move down the bank a little, and then descend to the water's edge. Fortunate that they did so. For now along the hard metalled road ahead of them comes the sharp clang of horses' hoofs, the sharp, commingled clatter of many horses' hoofs, that sound so difficult to describe in words, which arises from the movement of many horses together. It comes nearer and nearer, and now a hollower sound tells that the horsemen are upon the bridge, and those down below pause in the lavement of their hands, and looking up see the bridge crowded from end to end with horses and horsemen; they stand out clear against the sky, now brightening with the rising moon. The hearts of the women leap into their mouths. Will they be seen? Surely they must be, with their white clothing and so large a group of them. But they are not. The thoughts, as well as the eyes, of the horsemen are turned upon the city toward which they are hastening, and above which they note a gleam instead of the usual glimmer, and know that the usual feeble illumination by means of lamps has this night been supplemented by the strong light from the burning bungalows of the English.

Their attention was the more strongly directed that way because hitherto the thickly-wooded banks of the escape channel had lain between them and the city; it was on crossing the bridge that they had a clear open view toward it. And though the moon was rising it was still very dark down below in the narrow deep channel, with its thickly-wooded banks. The body of horsemen has

passed on with its confused clatter of hoofs and its confused sound of men's voices. The continually increasing silence affects the fugitives like a material thing, like a substantial pleasure, like a tangible gain : it is to them like food, like gold ; what food would be to the starving man and gold to the beggar. When it has become complete and full they breathe freely once more. Hay offers up a silent prayer. Had they kept on straight across the bridge they must have met the horsemen face to face. That might have meant immediate death for some ; it might have meant worse than death for others.

Crossing the bridge with a curious feeling, they pursue their way. They have come now to the end of the fruitful, tree-covered tract, and a wide stretch of the open, barren, denuded land which borders the valley of the Jumna stretches far before them, and looking across this they see a red glow in the sky. That is the west, and so it is not the glow of the rising moon. It is the light of a conflagration, and that is the direction in which the cantonment lies ; it is the glare of their burning bungalows. Old Brodie groans. He owns a great many of the bungalows in the cantonment, as he does in many other cantonments. This is a day of severe loss to him. And as they advance towards it the gleam becomes higher and brighter, higher and brighter to a degree which the short distance they have traversed cannot account for. The conflagration must be fast increasing. And when they come to the road that runs off to the right, that increasing brightness adds force to the advice of the voice from out the darkness, and they finally determine to follow it, the advice, and the road. They soon arrive at the edge of the reticulation of ravines which lies between the margin of the valley of the river and the high lands above. The night sounds have begun : the weird, unearthly, demoniacal yelling of the jackals ; the baying of the dogs in the villages ; the harsh cry of the peafowl disturbed in their roosting-places ; the hooting of owls and the screech of the night-jar. These ravines are very much the haunt of wild beasts, and they hear the horrible

laugh of the hyæna not far off, and a couple of wolves go across the road in front of them, with long, smooth, lolloping gallop, and a switching of tails.

And now they can see far around them, far over the treeless, broken, barren ground, and looking to the right they see the glow that marks the position of the city, the dwelling-place of the ancient ruling race ; and looking to the left they see the glare that marks the position of " the cantonment," the dwelling-place of the latest conquering race ; and behind them are dark masses of trees, and before them seems nothingness—they seem to be looking, that way, into infinite space. They are, in fact, looking over the wide shallow trough, or valley, of the river. By this time the moon has raised her huge red disc some distance above the horizon, and flooded the high land and the low land with her silvery light. The road begins to descend, and after winding for some time through the valleys of the ravines, brings them to the edge of the sacred stream, to the margin of the much-worshipped Jumna. They know that the water here can be of no great depth, for the main stream of the river runs, just now, under the opposite bank of the valley, more than a mile away. But still Hay thinks it better to try the stream before letting the ladies go in, and so he wades across it and back. It is nowhere more than knee deep. But there is another danger connected with the sacred stream besides that of drowning : it abounds with alligators ; and only a few days before the talk of the station had been about the quantity of jewellery—anklets, and bangles, and finger-rings, and toe-rings, the jewellery of women and children—that had been found in the stomach of a monstrous specimen of the class shot by an officer. And so the girls splash across the water with no pleasant feelings.

This trough or valley of the Jumna, cut out by the stream and in which it oscillates, is a region of a peculiar character, a wild and uninhabited region, and is made up of the present and past channels of the river, with their wide stretches of dry sand, and the quagmires and

morasses, the occasional patches of cultivation, the long reaches covered with tall grass or the thick-growing tamarisk, which lie between those channels. The road they are on is simply an earthen track. After they have been walking for some time they find themselves at the edge of a morass, across which there is no sign of a road, where the track ceases to have any further existence. They must have got off the cart track, as was easy enough to do, for it was not everywhere very clearly defined, and there were many other tracks. In fact, they find themselves in the midst of a labyrinth of tracks, cattle tracks, for the valley is a great grazing ground, especially at this season of the year. One of these tracks conducts them to the edge of a quagmire ; so does another ; and another : in fact, most of the tracks lead to the morasses in which the buffaloes love to wallow, to the pools of water which they work up into quagmires. Then they take a track which leads them through the midst of a long stretch of the bushy tamarisk, whose branches cut them like whips, and where they disturb a huge sounder of wild pigs, and send them scuttling away. Now they have to push their way through tall dry crackling reeds, now through thorny bushes, bushes armed with terrible thorns, thorns curved and straight, thorns like hooks and daggers. And now the track they have chosen leads them to the edge of a sullen, impassable ditch ; now across a dry jheel, where the little clay ripples crackle under their feet. Then the track leads them across a rudely cultivated tract, where the clods are as large and hard as boulders, and where the poor women, having only their thin house-shoes on, suffer very much. And so they keep wandering about, but cannot find the wheeled track again.

Their physical energy is now very low. Brodie and Hamilton have begun to quarrel. What they had all gone through that day was enough to strain the powers of any one to the utmost. With some, the exhaustion is complete ; they have begun to trench on the capital stock of existence, on the vital principle ; they have

begun, as it were, to devour themselves. They are overpowered by an intense and irresistible desire for sleep. It is said that the most cruel of all forms of torture is that of preventing a man from sleeping, keeping him awake until he dies. They must sleep, they must lie down and sleep, come what may. All thought of the past, all care for the future, is lost in that want of the present, that overpowering desire for sleep. Hamilton stumbles over a clod with a curse.

"I cannot walk any farther," he says, "I must have a sleep. I do not care to find the road—damn it." And he yawns a loud and prolonged yawn.

The two brave girls have said never a word, but Hay has observed how often Beatrice stumbles and staggers, and how frequently Lilian lags behind.

"It would have been as well to have got to the other side of the khadir" (valley of the river), he says, "though I do not suppose we could have got out of it before morning. We could not have crossed the river by night. We must have slept on the bank of the main channel *there*, and we may as well sleep here. We must have slept in the open and on the bare ground. It is probably safer that we should not sleep too near a public road."

"Oh, yes ; this place will do very well," says Hamilton, with another huge yawn. He would probably have lain down on the trunk of a tree laid across a yawning torrent, at the edge of a precipice.

"But we need not sleep in this rough field. That would not do for you," says Hay to Beatrice tenderly.

A little way off is a sand ridge ; and the clean dry slope of that will do very well ; and they have soon reached it ; and they have soon cast themselves down upon it, and they are all soon fast asleep—even the wife who has lost her husband, even the children who have lost their father, even the old man who has lost his money ; they have all soon obtained oblivion and rest—active, waking, sentient life had been carried to the verge of endurance—all but Hay, who determines to keep watch,

and lifting himself up when he knows the others are asleep, seats himself cross-legged.

And in the dead silence that now reigns around, the sound of their own movements ended, there fall upon his ear the twelve vibrations from the great palace gong—he can only hear the first strong strokes—that proclaim the midnight hour. He would rather have been out of hearing of the strokes altogether.

And so that memorable 11th of May, 1857, has come to an end. The fourth day of our tale has passed—we have gone through half our time.

CHAPTER XXVII.

WITH THE CATTLE-LIFTERS.

“WAH! what is this?” cries a voice in Hindustanee. Hay leaps to his feet and draws his sword—all three men have their swords—and touches young Hamilton with his foot. “The gun has not fired yet,” says the young fellow sleepily, thinking it is his bearer waking him for early morning parade. They are not out of sound of the piece, but its roar will not this morning proclaim the dominion of the English: that for a time has ended in Khizrabad. It is only the earliest dawn, but still it is light enough for Hay to see who the natives—there are four or five of them—are. They are Goojurs, members of a lawless, turbulent, predatory tribe which inhabits this upper length of the Jumna. Apart from peculiarities of dress, the men are easily recognizable by their strength and stature, and the wild fierceness of their look. And now, aroused by the voices of the natives, who are eagerly discussing the appearance of the party which they have so suddenly come upon, which they have put up like a covey of partridges, Hamilton and the others are on their feet too.

“You have run away from Khizrabad,” says one of the men, addressing Hay.

The words “run away” do not sound pleasant, especially in English ears. But the man does not mean them to be unpleasant. He does not mean to jeer at them, or scoff at them, or triumph over them. He has used the simplest words descriptive of the simple fact. If he had

ever had occasion to run away himself, he would have said simply, "I ran away."

"We have come from Khizrabad," says Hay.

"You could not have come from anywhere else," says the man.

Ufsur log (officers), the other natives say to one another.

"Will you come with us to our huts?" goes on the man who is addressing Hay.

"Your village?"

"No; our *tanda*" (kraal). "We have come down into the khadir to feed our herds of cattle. There are some English people at the huts already."

"English people! Where?"

"At our huts. Two Englishmen."

"Who are they? What are their names?" asks Hay eagerly.

"I do not know their names. How should I? But they are army men like yourselves, and one of them has a glass eye."

"A glass eye," exclaims Hay, "a glass eye; I do not remember any one with a glass eye."

"Will you come with us and join those other two?"

Hamilton and old Brodie are now both standing by Hay's side, they too with their drawn swords in their hands.

"What do you think?" says Hay, turning towards them.

"They may be wushing to lead us into a trap," says old Brodie, as he glances towards the sisters. He thinks the object of the men may be to get them, the girls, into their power. He wishes the women were not with them; he has wished so already, several times. It would have been so much easier for the men to fight, or, if it came to that, to run away, without them.

"They do not look unfriendly," says Hay.

"Do not be afraid," says the huge giant of a man—he looks like a bronze statue of Hercules as he stands there leaning on his club, the greater part of his person exposed

full to view—with the plainness of speech already commented on. “We have no desire to injure you, or those with you,” glancing at the women. “If we had, you could not prevent us. There are only two of you—the old fellow does not count—and our *luths* (clubs) are as good as your swords—better.” The long piece of male bamboo, heavily shod with iron at the end, on which he is leaning, is indeed a very lethal-looking weapon; it forms a combination of the mace and the quarter-staff of the middle ages. “We could easily overpower you.”

He does not mean to be offensive or wound their feelings, only to state the fact.

“We should not mind fighting you if we had not the women with us,” is what Hay would like to say very much, but he cannot. He speaks to his companions in English.

“Two more fellows would be a great addition to our strength. We could then hold our own—present a better front. And we may be of help to them.” And then in Hindustanee to the man: “You have said you do not mean to hurt or injure us?”

“I have said it.”

“How far are your huts?”

“About a mile off.”

“Very good. We will go with you.”

He has decided.

They move through the strange tract, with its ever-changing yet permanent features, with much more ease than during the night-time. They are not whipped or stung by the tamarisk branches, or stabbed and torn by the thorns; they do not go stumbling over the clods in the fields, or have their feet sink into the slush of quagmires. But to the two sisters it often seemed that they would rather have been forcing their way through the bushes than have had these men hold the branches aside with such excessive care. The more pleasurably the men look upon them the less pleasurable do they find it. But their thoughts are diverted from themselves by taking part in the discussion as to who the man with the glass

eye may be. They know no one in the station with a glass eye. No one of the party has ever heard of any one in the place who had one. They know the faces of all the English people in the station, no matter to what class they belong. And the men were quite sure that this was a European, not an East Indian. Who can it be? they wonder over and over again.

"It may be some one who was passing through the station."

The temporary quarters of the herdsmen now come in view. The tanda, or kraal, is formed by two long parallel fences, and the rough grass sheds which connect their ends, the pen being about three times as long as wide. As they are approaching directly towards the back of one of the sheds they cannot see into the enclosure. They have reached the shed and go round its corner, and along the side of the high hedge to the opening, closed by a rude hurdle, leading into the yard. Dr. Brodie passes in through this, the only opening, with great misgiving. He does not like the looks of the men. (And, taking them altogether, they certainly are a most villainous-looking lot.)

And the sisters share in his apprehensions. The men seem to them very savage and cruel-looking, though some of them had helped them assiduously, much too assiduously, they think, and cast on them looks of kindness, looks that were a great deal too kind, they thought. And certainly the long tangled locks and brushed-up mustachios and brushed-back whiskers of the men give them a very wild, fierce look. This big giant of a man with the hair growing so thick on his chest and arms, along his fingers and on his shoulder-blades, might stand for Orson. This short, squat fellow with the extraordinarily ugly countenance is a living, moving Caliban. It would be easier to take them for bandits than honest herdsmen. They were in fact all robbers in the honourable way of cattle-lifting.

Hay and Mrs. Fane, walking together, enter the enclosure a little way behind the others. As they enter

they see a man in English attire, but with a black face, seated in front of one of the grass sheds.

"That is the man with the glass eye," says the herdsman walking with them.

"Oh, it is a half-caste," says Mrs. Fane, in a disappointed, indifferent tone of voice. She looked down on half-castes.

But now the man rises from the bedstead in a quiet, leisurely way, and Mrs. Fane gives a strange half-smothered cry.

"What is this?" she cries, in a voice whose fearfulness and trembling is quite new in Hay's ears. Mrs. Fane's most striking outward characteristic was her calm, quiet, dignified, self-possessed, and perhaps somewhat too stately bearing. This was in some part artificial and assumed, but in most part natural and inherent. The strength of the acquired habit, the force of the natural quality, were such that they had withstood all the trials of the day before, even that of hearing the sound, seeing the smoke, of the great explosion which had slain her husband, so that Hay had marvelled at her self-possession. Now, hearing that strange quaver in her voice, he turns towards her, and is more than ever astonished to see that she is trembling violently, and that her eyes seem starting out of her head; then, remembering her usual lofty calmness and recalling to mind Mrs. Lyster's seizure of the day before, he begins to be alarmed also.

"This——" he says.

"He," she says, pointing to the man by the bedstead.

Then, as the man begins to advance towards them, Mrs. Fane gives a strange gurgling cry, and gasping out, "It is he!" Hay sees her dart towards the dark-faced man and clasp him in her arms, and Hay himself gives a jump as the well-known exclamations of "Oh! ah! hah!" fall upon his ear, and seem to come from this black-faced man—from this person of colour. He rushes after Mrs. Fane. It is indeed so: it is Major Fane, his face and hands all blackened with gunpowder.

"Your father was not killed in the explosion; he

escaped alive ; he is here—there,” shouts Hay, as he rushes towards the sisters. On entering the enclosure they and young Hamilton had seen an Englishman advancing toward them, and when they had found that it was Major Coote, whom they all know so well, there was a prolonged hand-shaking, and an immediate outburst of inquiries.

“Father ! Alive ! Here !” exclaims Beatrice, looking at Hay with amazed, bewildered looks.

“I know him by his walk,” cries Lilian as she flies away, and Beatrice rushes after her.

The others remain where they are for a while, not wishing to intrude on this reunion, and then go forward and join the family group.

Then comes a long hand-shaking and hearty congratulations ; they are all delighted that Fane has survived to enjoy the knowledge of his own heroic deed and receive the applause of his countrymen.

“Flannagan thought of it and did it ; bwave fellow that,” says the Major, quietly stroking one long whisker with a hand no longer lily-white.

Then come more eager questionings. There is a great deal to be asked about and narrated and discussed. But the present and not the past is just now their immediate concern. What must they do now ? Their object is to get to Abdoolapore. Where they stand they are thirty miles from it, seven miles from Khizrabad. It is desirable to increase the latter distance as soon as possible. Did the valley of the river run directly towards Abdoolapore the matter would be settled. They would move up along its secure length at once. But it does not. They must leave the safe basin of the river for the unsafe upland very soon. Shall they utilize the cool morning hours and try and get half-way to Abdoolapore, and then seek shelter and concealment in a mango grove for the rest of the day, and push on again in the evening ? Or shall they remain where they are during the day, and start for Abdoolapore in the evening, and try and get over the thirty miles in the course of the night—the cool, sheltering night ? On the one hand is the fatigue of the long

walk—it is of the women they have to think—on the other, the exposure during the daytime, the danger of being seen. They consult the herdsmen who seem so friendly towards them. They are all for the latter course. It has to be considered that the ladies will be more comfortable where they are than in any mango grove. But that is nothing. They would run a terrible risk by appearing on that village-crowded upland in the broad daylight. The news of what happened at Khizrabad yesterday has spread far and wide. The rule of the English is held to be over; with the lawless clans the wish is father to the thought.

The tract of country they will have to traverse is inhabited chiefly by Ranghurs, men of a rough, rude sort, who earn their living partly by honest means, but chiefly by dishonest ones; who do a little agriculture and a great deal of robbery; feed cattle largely, and lift them largely; a reaving, thieving clan. A reward has been offered for every English person carried into Khizrabad. They would be seized and taken back. The Ranghurs were quite capable of slaying them on their own account. They were safer here during the daytime than they would be on the plain above at twice the distance from Khizrabad.

They settle to remain where they are until evening.

“We will do what we can to make you comfortable,” says a ferocious-looking drover. They placed one shed at the disposal of the men (they always come first in the East), and another at the disposal of Mrs. Fane and her daughters. Orson brings them bedsteads to sit on. Caliban brings them water to wash with. They are not able to supply them with any of the requisites of the toilet. Each man’s own apparatus in that way consists wholly and solely—for they use no soap, and a piece of chewed stick serves them for tooth-brush—of a little round mirror, in which he is fond of regarding himself, and of a rough wooden tooth-comb. But they give them a clean sheet on which to dry their hands and faces. They bring them water to drink, and, from having been

out all night in the porous earthen jars, it is deliciously cool. They bring them *ludoos* and *peras* (sweetmeats), with which to stay their appetites until the time for the cooking of the midday meal arrives. And then most of the villainous-looking crew depart to pursue their morning avocations.

And now with the fugitives comes a more detailed narration and discussion of the events of the day before.

"I did not know you," says Hay to Major Fane, "because they said you were the man with the glass eye. I wonder what they meant by that?"

"They were referring to my eye-glass, I suppose."

"We never thought of that."

They are fiercely angry, as well as sorrowful, as they speak of the disaffection of their men, so injurious to their feelings, so injurious it may be to their interests. If the men mutiny the officers must be somehow in fault, is, not unnaturally, though sometimes unjustly, the common opinion.

"You are the only one likely to come out of this business with any credit," says Major Coote to Major Fane. "We others did nothing, and were not allowed to do anything."

They mourn the loss of so many of their friends and companions, mourn the manner of their death. And so the moments slip by, and then the herdsmen return and begin to prepare the midday meal, and the fugitives watch the familiar process with a new and personal interest. That process is a very cleanly, if also a very simple one. First comes the cleansing and sprinkling with water of a little plot of ground, and the setting up on it by means of half a dozen clods of earth of a simple fireplace. Then comes the preliminary bath, without which no man may sit down to cook or eat. Then each man steps into his prepared plot—now become sacred ground into which no one else may set foot—and kneads the flour in a wide brass dish (the *thalee* now seen so much in English drawing-rooms), kneads it well with his fists, for on that kneading greatly depends the lightness

of the cakes; and when the dough is of a proper consistency he rolls it into balls between the palms of his hands, and then flattens them out into discs, and then by throwing them from palm to palm widens them out into great circles which he places on the iron plate or girdle which he has already set on one compartment of the fireplace in which the brushwood fire is now crackling; and then when the cake is done on both sides he whips it off the girdle and sets it up on end by the side of the fire, which not only prevents it from getting cold, but causes it to puff out and have a crust; and this is the way in which the unleavened cakes which are being cooked every day by millions of people over a large portion of India, and have been so cooked for thousands of years, are made. Some lentil porridge has been cooking in another little brass pot set on the other compartment of the fireplace, and when this is ready it is poured into the wide brass dish in which the cakes were kneaded, since washed out, and the men break off pieces of the cakes and dip them into the porridge and eat. This wide brass dish to eat from, and the famous brass drinking vessel called the *lotah*, form the only appurtenances of the table, not only of the common people, but even of the better classes of Hindus, who all eat squatted on the ground, and with their fingers, like these herdsmen. But most of the men only cook cakes, and eat them with the *ghee*, or rancid butter, which is so abundant with them. And each man has to-day cooked an additional quantity for the guests. Two of the most cut-throat-looking villains of the lot go round and collect the food and distribute it to the English. They take it to them on platters made of leaves. The use of the brass vessels is entirely restricted to the owners; the touch of the Christians would pollute them. Four or five of the cakes being put on the leaf platter, the lentil porridge is put on the topmost one, which serves as dish until it comes to be eaten itself. The drink is water or milk, chiefly that of the buffalo. With us the primitive world has passed away; a sojourn in a place like this carries you back to it. Then you come into close

contact with the animal world, and have your feelings violently aroused with regard to its members : come to love those which are gentle and tamable and minister to the comfort and support of man, which supply him with meat and drink and raiment ; come to hate those which are fierce and wild, and inimical to man and hurtful to him ; come to have a very strong preference for those you can eat and who cannot eat you, over those you cannot eat and who can eat you. Then you come to understand how the cow, " the perpetual mother," has come to be worshipped ; how the gentle lamb, which affords man such excellent food and clothing, came to be a divine emblem ; why the sheep are put on the right hand and the goats on the left.

Fane has had nothing to eat for twenty-four hours. He goes off to get some more cakes. To see him, a man with an intense pride of caste, stand at a careful distance from the little cooking-place, which even his shadow would defile, and hold out his hand while the humble herdsman, who will not in his whole lifetime earn so much as the Major receives in a single month, throws the cakes into his out-held hand—throws them, not from insolence, but because he has to avoid all chance of personal contact—was a sight to give rise to many reflections. In Europe the pride of caste is but a superfluous possession of the wealthy and well-born. The caste system of the Hindus gives strength to the weak, pride to the humble, self-respect to the lowly ; it is a strong armour, a fence ; it protects if it restricts.

Then the hot day leaps upon them like a lion very fierce and terrible. They talk and talk to make the hours go by, but the heat is very terrible ; it is that of the simoom, it is that of the burning fiery furnace. The sheds afford them some shelter from the rays of the sun, but none from the dust-laden, fiery, hot wind. They experience a terrible feeling of oppression ; they know not whether to sit or stand. The mosquitoes, excited to frenzy by finding this richer blood protected by a thinner skin brought within their reach, attack them furiously. And the flies are in

clouds, in shoals ; they are "in grievous swarms," as they were when the plague of them came to be numbered with the plague of the slaying of the firstborn, and of the rivers of blood. And with many their bodily sufferings are aggravated by mental ones. The irritation of the nerves, due to the heat, is added to by the irritation of apprehension. These herdsmen are hereditary robbers ; they belong to a lawless, predatory class. The fugitives have no money about their persons, but they have their watches and gold chains, and Mrs. Fane and her daughters have valuable rings on their fingers. Notoriously addicted to "robbery by violence," whether they attack a party of travellers on the road or carry a house by assault, these drovers certainly look capable of any villainy. You would sooner take them for bloodthirsty bandits than for simple honest herdsmen. Certainly, so far, they have behaved with great kindness to the English fugitives. But how long will that last ? May not their bloodthirstiness, their cupidity, their lust, be aroused at any moment ? To Dr. Brodie these are hours of great torture, and even the other men take care to have their swords within reach. But the day is slipping by, and the time of their departure drawing nigh. The sun is declining in the west, and the evening is at hand.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

BY ROAD AND RIVER.

At last ! the day is done, the evening come.

They must now get over the main stream of the river before they can get out of its valley. There is a ferry where the road to Abdoolapore which they wish to reach crosses this channel, four or five miles higher up the valley. But they do not think it prudent to make for this public place, at which the mutineers may possibly have set a guard. They will make the passage at a nearer point, even though they must there ford the river.

The sun is near his setting when they leave the kraal, accompanied by six or seven of the herdsmen. How quiet the great ocean of air now lies after all those hours of constant movement ! how still after all that fierce unrest ! The air no longer dances to the fierce rod of the sun ; that withdrawn, it stands still. That daily western gale always dies away completely in the evening. Very pleasant the stillness after all the past turmoil.

For some time they pass over many open grazing-grounds, over many long reaches covered with tamarisk, across many dry channels, along the side of many now dry jheels, and so on until they arrive at the edge of the huge stretch of pure sand which marks the limit to which the water extends in the rains in this present main channel of the river. Walking across this is most toilsome. When they first enter on the sands these are of a rosy hue :

by the time they have got to the end of them the after-glow has quite faded away, and left them a ghostly gray. At length they reach the edge of the stream. Generally the sacred river runs as yellow as the Tiber, but there is just now a milky tinge upon it ; this indicates the melting of the snow on its parent glacier.

"There is a flood coming down the river," says Hay to one of the herdsmen.

"Yes, sir. The river has risen a great deal since this morning. I waded across it the whole way then ; I think I should have to swim now in the middle."

This is an untoward circumstance. Neither Mrs. Fane nor her daughters can swim, as Hay knows.

"Then how are we to get the ladies across ?" he says. "None of them can swim."

"The deep part is not very wide. If they will let themselves float we can get them across it. You gentlemen can all swim ?"

"Yes."

Hay announces the fact to the others. To make for the ferry now would entail on them much additional fatigue and a great loss of time ; every half-hour now is most valuable : the summer night is brief—they have thirty miles to walk.

"Is there no other ford than this ?" asks Mrs. Fane—fearful, not for herself, but for her daughters.

"Yes, but three miles lower down, and there would probably be the same difficulty there."

"We can easily take each lady across the deep part," says the herdsman, "one of us to each lady, if they will only not be afraid. If they will only not be frightened when they are off their feet, and let themselves float easily, and just let the right hand"—the river flowed from left to right—"rest on the shoulder of the man with them, there will be no danger."

The Englishmen discuss the matter a little apart.

"We think it would be best to cross here if we can, Theodosia," says Major Fane to his wife. "Do you think you and the girls could manage it ? You must keep

viewy cool. You must not stwuggle. Just let yourself float easily and let your hand rest lightly on the man's shoulder."

"I could manage it," says Mrs. Fane, "but I do not know about the girls."

Lilian glances fearfully across the broad expanse of the water, on which the darkness is now settling, but she answers bravely,—

"Oh yes, we could manage it."

"I will take Miss Fane across myself," says Hay.

"I am sure there will be no danger," cries Beatrice, now completely reassured. Her heart, too, had sunk within her as she had looked across the darkening width of water.

"Let yourself float easily. Keep cool. Let your hand rest lightly on the shoulder of the man you are with"—directions easier to give than follow. Keep cool; do not fear, when there is the greatest reason to fear. Do not struggle, when the strongest, the most overpowering instincts of human nature, the love of life and the fear of death, impel you to struggle. Let your hand rest lightly on the shoulder! That is all very well in the case of a partner with whom you are about to float over the smooth yet firm floor of a ball-room, but not so easy when you have to float across a depth of drowning water. But with Hay, Beatrice can go anywhere.

"Yes, we can take the ladies across ourselves," says Coote. "That is to say, if we can all swim."

They all can.

"I will take my wife across," says Fane.

"Then I will take Miss Lilian," says Coote.

It is so settled.

They enter the water: two of the herdsmen lead the way, and the English people come after them in couples, the couples arranged above, and young Hamilton and old Brodie walk side by side and bring up the rear. They were enjoined to follow strictly behind the leaders, lest they should miss the ford, get into deep or dangerous water. A sudden plunge into that might prove fatal;

in the case of any of the women, if they were taken off their feet and carried away it might be impossible to rescue them, from the difficulty of seeing where they were in the fast-increasing gloom. And so they move on in a long double file. They move forward with a great splashing, made the greater in order to keep off the alligators, who are not likely, however, to approach so large a party. And so they move on—splash—splash—splash—splash—splash for a long way: for, as is usually the case on the winding Jumna, the shoal is a very wide one. For most part of its width it is very shallow. For a great distance the water is not much more than ankle-deep; the ladies can easily keep their dresses above it. But now they have to abandon all thought of their dresses. Soon the water is knee-deep, soon waist-deep. The two leading herdsman stop: they have reached the edge of the deep water. Hitherto they had been conscious only of the great splashing, but now in the sudden deep silence the gurgle and rush of the river is heard; and it cannot but fall fearfully on the ears of the women. Now has come their time of trial. Amid the encircling gloom they can discern the top of the curved bank they have to make for, between which and them the deep stream lies, for the bank is not very far off. But this deep stream is all the swifter because of the narrow channel in which it runs.

“West your hand upon my shoulder lightly, and let yourself float quietly, and it will be all wight,” says Fane to his wife; and now he has struck out across the darkening water. Think of the feelings of the two girls at this moment! How their hearts stand still! How they strain their eyes to see, their ears to hear! But soon a welcome shout announces that the first essaying of the passage has been successful, though the shout comes from a good way down the river. Now it is the turn of William Hay and Beatrice Fane, and they are off. Think of the feelings of the parents as they stood upon the bank and their children were in the stream—of whose force they have just had proof—running the risk of

death ! In the broad daylight, in the presence of so many men, so many strong swimmers, the danger might not have been so very great. But now a slip of the hand would mean almost certain death. Rest the hand lightly on the shoulder !—that was all very well, but a want of grasp of it might lose you your life. Hay has a badly wounded arm, but he swims like a fish, and in this case he is not likely to spare his powers of swimming. He puts them forth so effectually that he goes almost straight across the stream, and strikes the bank much higher up than Fane had done. “Let her come safely across, too, O my God !” prays Mrs. Fane in her heart. And now Major Coote and Lilian, too, have reached the bank, and Mrs. Fane is happy. And now the men come swimming across in a body. The light has faded away completely, and it is intensely dark. It is a black darkness here at the foot of the high bank forming the side of the valley.

“This is the pathway,” cries one of the herdsmen very loud. “This way. We must hurry on, for you have a long way to go.”

“Yes,” says Hay. — “This way !” he shouts in English.—“Is that you, Hamilton ?”

“Yes.”

“Is Brodie with you ?”

“No.”

“I suppose he has landed lower down. — Brodie ! Brodie !” he shouts ; but there is no answer.

“Brodie ! Brodie !” shouts young Hamilton ; but there is no answer.

“He was an old man, and perhaps the strength of the stream was too great for him, and he is drowned,” says one of the herdsmen without any circumlocution. “He started with us, I know, for I was next to him.”

Hay puts his hand to his mouth, and shouts out, “Brodie ! Brodie !” until the welkin rings again.

“You need not wait for him, and you need not call to him, for he will not come or hear. He is gone dead for sure,” says the herdsman who had last spoken. “He

started with me, and as he has not reached the bank he must have gone down into the race below the cliff."

"Is there a race?"

"A very swift one, at the end of the hollow."

By the hollow he means the hollow in the high bank of the valley, which forms a sort of bay, in which they had landed, and by reason of which the ford had been established here.

"Let us go down to it," cries Hay.

"You are only losing time needlessly; you will never see that gentleman again," says the herdsman.

"We must make what search we can for him," cries Hay.

He and Hamilton follow the river down to the end of the bay. It impinges directly on the clay cliff, which here presents a perpendicular face, and flows along it in many a swirl and eddy, and with excessive swiftness.

"It is a dangerous bit of water, and he was an old man, and he was swimming in his clothes," says the herdsman, who holds so strongly to the belief that the absent man is dead and drowned for certain; and the sight of that rushing rapid causes the two young Englishmen to think that it must be so "for certain" too. But they have a natural feeling against going away from the place too soon, against coming to that conclusion too hastily.

"Cannot we continue our way down the river? He may have got to shore lower down," says Hay.

"It would take you a long time to mount the cliff, and you could not keep along the edge of it continuously, it is so cut up by ravines; and as you would have to go round each one of these it would take you one hour to get down half a mile," says the herdsman.

They turn sorrowfully back. And these swiftly-passing moments are of the utmost value to them, and they have really spent a good deal of time—as was subsequently to appear, too much—in the search.

"His body is now a mile from this, and his soul with God," says one of the herdsman as they begin to retrace their steps.

"He was not a bad chap after all," says young Hamilton. And that was the dirge or requiem of poor old Peter Brodie. Most of us will have as short a one.

"Let us move on, let us move; we have no time to lose," cries Hay, after they have rejoined the others, and he has said briefly, "I am afraid poor Dr. Brodie is drowned"—anxious to prevent the ladies from dwelling on the event; and he hurries them away from the river bank."

The sisters cast a horrified glance over the dim expanse of the river, guilty of many a death, as they turn away from it.

The pathway runs for a long way up a narrow ravine and then ascends to the level of the country above. Here the fierce-faced herdsmen are to leave them.

"Follow this track, taking no other, neither to the right hand nor the left, and it will bring you to the metalled road. That goes straight to Abdoolapore. Or, if there are any twists and turnings in it, no other metalled road crosses it, so you cannot miss your way."

"Ver goot! Haw! To you we mosh oblige! Haw!" is the way in which we might try to give some idea of the little Hindustanee sentence in which Major Fane endeavours to convey to the drovers, who have proved so much more kindly than their looks, his sense of the obligation he and the others lie under to them. Major Fane was a kind of man not likely to have much intercourse with the people of the country or to consider it worth his while to acquire a proper conversational command of their language. But Major Coote liked the natives, and his shooting excursions had brought him into close and constant intercourse with them.

He thanks the herdsmen in better terms.

"We have nothing to pay you with just now," he is adding (in India you never carry money about the person), when one of them, the most predatory-looking rascal of the lot, says,—

"We want nothing of you. We would not take anything from you."

"But we should like to make you some return for the great kindness we have received at your hands."

"Well, sir, we earn our living in various ways, as our forefathers did before us; and some of these ways are not approved of by your police officers and magistrates. If you would send us a certificate stating that we had helped you, it might perhaps be of service to some of us in the day of trouble."

"We will send you that and something else to remember us by," says Coote. "But to whom are we to address it? I know the name of your village."

"Address it to me—to Dholuk Singh." And then, after more thanks, leave is taken of these rough thieving herdsmen, from whom they had expected to receive so much injury and had met with so much kindness.

The moon has now risen, and the path runs clear before them. Many other pathways cross or leave it, but none of them confuse them—they differ so much in character from the one they have been enjoined to follow, or run so obviously out of their way. But now the pathway enters a dhâk jungle and winds about so much as to cause them to lose their direction. In the middle of an open space, ringed round with trees, beyond which they cannot see, the pathway suddenly divides into three, all three of the same size, and all going very much in the same direction. Which are they to take? "The middle one," says Hay unhesitatingly; the herdsmen had told them to turn neither to the right hand nor to the left. While they are debating they are very much surprised to see two natives appear before them; they seem to have risen up out of the ground, which, in a certain sense, is indeed the case. For these were two thieves who were on their way to Khizrabad, which they thought would just now prove an admirable field for the exercise of their skill. They had been moving conspicuously across the middle of the open space, when they had seen a large party enter upon that little amphitheatre through its surrounding wall of trees. They had immediately squatted themselves down behind a little bush, not higher

than an ordinary chair, but which afforded them all the concealment they needed. They had then brought their keen hearing to bear on finding out who these people might be. It soon informed them.

"*Feringhee log*" (English people) ?

"Yes."

"From Khizrabad ?"

"So."

"Making for Abdoolapore ?"

"So."

"Too many to rob ?"

"So."

They watch them until they come to the divergence of the pathways.

"They do not know the way ?"

"No."

"He will lead them into Khizrabad and claim the reward offered for their apprehension ?"

"So."

He is a fellow of few words, of monosyllables, not a man of glib tongue like his companion : he supplies in their confederacy the brute force, the other supplies the brains. As they get near the English people they make them a deep salaam.

"Which of these pathways will take us to the road that runs towards Abdoolapore, crossing the Jumna by a ferry a little way from here ?" ask Hay.

"That is the one," says the artful glib-tongued member of the thievish brotherhood, pointing to the glimmering line that runs away to the right.

"That one !" exclaims Hay, in a tone of astonishment. "Why, that one runs south, and Abdoolapore lies to the north of us !"

"Oh, it winds about a good deal. It has many turns and twists in it. We ourselves are making for the road you want. Our village lies by the side of it. You have only to accompany us. We are in a hurry to reach our home ; the night is advancing." And he and the other man move along the pathway he had indicated. The

English folks follow, though Hay keeps looking up at the moon and exclaiming, "Extraordinary! most extraordinary! We keep facing the moon, and she ought to be to the right of us."

Then the glib-tongued thief places himself by Hay's side and enters into conversation with him. His speech is fluent and polished to a degree that appears very surprising in a common villager, as he seems to be. This attracts Hay's attention.

"Your tongue is very clean. You speak well."

"I was servant to a very learned man for many years—ten years—from the age of fourteen to that of twenty-three. He taught me to read and write. I suppose you honourable gentlemen have been forced to leave Khizrabad owing to the unfortunate circumstances of yesterday?" he goes on glibly.

"Yes."

"How disgracefully and how foolishly these sepoys have behaved by being unfaithful to their salt, and throwing away their means of livelihood."

"Yes; most wickedly and foolishly. It seems to me that we are going due south."

"A twist in the pathway. I suppose you do not hold, sir, that the rule of the English has been overturned and that of the Nuwâb Sahib re-established for ever, as the people are saying?"

"No. I do not see that the pathway twists, and we are steadily going south."

"We honest people prefer the rule of the English."

"I should say we were going in the direction of Khizrabad."

"There have been terrible doings there. All the Christian people have been killed and their houses plundered and burnt; even women and children have been slain. O Lord! that there should be such wicked people in this world: thieves, and robbers, and murderers, deceivers, and betrayers, traffickers in human blood."

"The moon is still full face to us."

"But we are great lovers of the English."

“ You understand what road we want to get to ? You are quite sure that this pathway leads to it ? ”

“ Oh, yes. But the road lies a good way off, and the windings of the pathway make the distance longer.”

They move for some time in another and denser dhâk jungle, where it is impossible to take any note of the points of the compass. But at length they pass out from it on to a broad, open, barren plain. And now the smooth-tongued thief hastens to ply Hay with questions. Which was his regiment ? How had he escaped from Khizrabad ? Where had he passed the preceding night—and this day ?

As they cross the open plain Hay catches sight of a great depression in the land to the right. He loses sight of it again as they pass across a freshly broken-up tract, where the poorly cultivated clod-laden fields, having around them thin miserable fences to keep out the antelope, alternate with patches of ancient scrub. Then the appearance of groves begins to indicate that they are entering on a more fertile, or longer cultivated, tract. And the glimmering lights and the barking of dogs begin to indicate the vicinity of villages. And Hay remarks that all the lights glimmer, and the barks sound to the left, and not to the right of him ; a void space seems to lie in that direction, and now again he seems to be looking into it.

“ What is that ? ” he asks of the talking thief, interrupting him in the midst of his glib discourse.

“ That ! What ? ”

“ That hollow ; that lower ground to the right.”

“ It is some lower ground. Yes, to-day those villainous, evil-minded sepoys have been acting as if the whole place belonged to them ; they have been abusing the respectable inhabitants ; no respectable woman dare show herself in the streets ; they have been compelling the shopkeepers to sell to them at their own prices—sometimes they do not pay them at all. It is an evil state of things. The rogues and rascals have it all their own way. Honest people——”

"Of what stream is that the valley? I see the glimmer of water."

"Oh, of the Hindun. Honest people go in fear of their lives."

"*The Hindun!*" cries Hay. "Why, that is some eight miles from the Jumna. We could not have come that distance yet."

The Hindun is the first great affluent of the Jumna after it leaves its parent mountains. It joins it just below Khizrabad, and so makes it navigable from that point downward.

"Oh, the two rivers make a great bend and come together very near here; the edges of their lowlands are only about three miles apart. You will see that the edge of the valley of the river will be near us only for a short way. The bend is a very sharp one."

There must certainly be a very sharp bend in the course of the river, or in the run of the pathway, for they suddenly find themselves at the very edge of the depression or valley, with the shining stream flowing close beneath them, and then but a few paces further on and they have turned their faces away from it, and the high tree-covered tableland lies before them.

But the sight of the flowing water has been enough for Hay.

"This is the Hindun itself—the river," he says to the nimble-tongued thief.

"Yes, the river itself."

"How comes it then that we are looking down stream? If we were on the bank of the Hindun and had it on our right-hand side, we should have the stream flowing towards us and not away from us. We should be looking up stream."

"We were looking up stream just now."

"No, we were not. Are you sure this is not the valley of the Jumna? You villain! you know it is. You are conducting us back to Khizrabad," and he seizes the man by the shoulder; but the thief slips out of his grasp by a practised wriggle.

“If we could only have got you round this corner it would have been all right. We should have got you to the first outpost where the Nuwâb’s troops are stationed. Good-bye!” and he darts away, his heels as nimble as his tongue, and his confederate follows him.

“The scoundrels!” cries Hay. “They wanted to deliver us up to the Nuwâb for the sake of the reward. They would have made a good sum by us.”

There is nothing to be done now but retrace their steps. The smooth-tongued rascal had inflicted a very great injury on them; he had robbed them of some of the precious hours of the night, he had robbed them of much of their physical strength—and the ladies, unaccustomed to walking, more accustomed to riding in a carriage, needed the whole of their available stock of it for the work of the night. How wearisome, how profitless seems their journey back to the point from which they had been misled! That needless waste of time and strength depresses their spirits. Indeed, had it not been for this misleading they would probably have reached Abdoolapore the next morning, and this narrative been the shorter. This time they follow the middle one of the three divergent pathways, and it conducts them all right to the public highway. They move much more quickly along the smooth metalled highroad, not only because of its smoothness, but because their hearts are lighter at the thought that they have now, as it were, got grasp of the line connecting them with the haven of safety. Hope will make even a rough road smooth. The only drawback is that they have now entered on a highly cultivated, and therefore densely populated, tract. The villages and hamlets are everywhere around them, their positions indicated by the twinkling of lights, the barking of dogs. But luckily they come to none lying immediately on the road. And this is the time of the night when the villagers are all gathered together in their villages, and are smoking their hooqas and enjoying a little bit of friendly gossip before lying down on their carpets, or rude bedsteads, out in the open air.

But still Major Coote enjoins strict silence as they move along in the shadow of the tall trees bordering the road. Then the cultivated tract comes to an end, and they launch from its sharp edge on to a barren plain, whose wide, level expanse, with the moonbeams glittering on the saline efflorescence with which it is covered, makes it look like a great lake or sea. And when they have advanced on to the plain they have nothing but its glimmering surface around them, and nature seems reduced to its elements of earth and sky. In the absence of everything else the moonlight seems to take solid form : the silvery lustre seems palpable. There is nothing for their eyes to rest on, unless, indeed, they look up and let them rest, awed and delighted, on the majestic orb speeding in solitary grandeur across the vault of the sky. There is no longer need for the fugitives to keep together in a compact body. They separate into couples. Some of them prefer to walk on the flat surface of the plain rather than on the road. William Hay and Beatrice are walking together, she asking him tenderly about his wound. The husband and wife are walking together, side by side, as they have not walked since that long ago when they were first engaged. The feeling of close relationship which in ordinary and commonplace times is apt to become ordinary and commonplace too is vivified in times of trial. The reviving and strengthening of such bonds is the gain of loss, the good of ill, the jewel in the head of the ugly toad adversity. And young Hamilton is walking by the side of Lilian, who finds the surface of the plain more pleasant to her stockinged feet—she had lost her shoes in the Jumna—than the hard metalled surface of the road or its dusty sides. And Major Coote trudges along by himself, lamenting only that he has not a cigar to smoke.

And so they move on talking, or silent in unspoken communion. And so they toil slowly on one way, while the great orb is speeding the other. And now the shore, the edge of another fertile grove and hamlet-covered tract, looms up before them, and they have reached the

end of the barren, sea-like plain. Once more is there a line of tall umbrageous trees on either side of the road ; once more do the groves, and villages, and hamlets loom in dark masses. But the position of the latter is no longer indicated by the twinkling of lights and the barking of dogs, for the barren plain was a very wide one, and had taken them long to cross, and it was now the deadest time of the night, the time of deepest repose for nature and for man, the hours between midnight and morn. Now was not heard the voice of beast or bird, of hyæna or of jackal, of nightjar or of owl. Save for the vivid moonlight the pulse of nature stood still. There is a chilliness in the air. They suffer from the cold of the night, as they have suffered from the heat of the day : feel it the more because of that heat, feel it the more because of their wet garments drenched through in the passage of the river. As they seat themselves on the masonry platform of a well by the side of the road to rest themselves, they lament that they have not brought with them something wherewith to draw the water, because they are suffering also a great deal from thirst. (When the cultivator goes to the well in order to water his fields he takes his own huge leathern bucket and long thick rope, just as he takes his own pair of bullocks, and each person coming to a well draws the water for himself by means of his own line and lotah, or brass drinking-vessel.) Looking at their watches, they see that it is a little after two o'clock. We have passed, therefore, from the fifth to the sixth day of our tale. But, in order to chronicle events in the due order of time, we must now go back to the fourth day, the memorable Monday, the day of the outbreak, instead of on with the sixth.

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CHAPTER XXIX.

IN THE PALACE.

WHEN Mr. Wynn was told by his servants of the disturbance in the city, he thought it a mere ordinary bazaar riot. Even when, in accord with their urgent appeals, he had determined to take May up to the cantonment, he supposed that it was probably only one of those fights between Hindus and Mohammedans which were not uncommon in the town. Even when his progress had been interrupted and his course diverted, when the Nuwâb's troopers had ordered his coachman to drive to the palace, no sense of any especial personal danger, for May or himself, troubled him. In fact, he looked on the being conducted to the palace as being taken to a place of safety. The Nuwâb had always been on the most friendly terms with the English residents and with himself. May herself had been more disturbed. She had not witnessed one of those religious conflicts betwixt Mohammedans and Hindus which had often attained large proportions and given the local authorities so much trouble to subdue. But when, on stepping out of the carriage within the palace walls, she sees Philip Lennox ride in through the gateway, she too feels that all is safe. The vivid brightening of her face, as she turned it towards him, which made its beauty shine forth as does a fair landscape when a gleam of sunshine falls upon it—the vivid look of joy and welcome, loving welcome, in her eyes—caused Lennox to think himself amply repaid for having given up the chance of active military employ-

ment without the palace to-day. The officer commanding the Nuwâb's troops had started when he had seen Lennox ride in at the gateway; but he now walks quietly up to the group, and saying, "You would like to join the other English people," bids them follow him. The aspect of affairs does not seem disturbing to the new-comers. But when Lennox observes the dirty, neglected condition of the little courtyard into which they are conducted, observes how carefully the gate is closed behind them, and hears their conductor say in an off-hand way, and in a tone of voice very different indeed from the polite one in which he had addressed them as they came along, "Here are some more of them," he experiences a sudden misgiving, which, if it depresses him, also makes him glad that he had determined to come into the palace and be with May. Were she safe within it, he would rather be without; but if any danger threatens her within, he is glad to be within too, by her side, though there is no man on earth to whom inaction on a day like this could be more terrible. The narrow, dirty staircase, to the foot of which they are conducted, does not add to his misgivings, for he knows that these are common in the finest Eastern houses. Splendid inner domestic staircases belong to the chilly West; magnificent outer public flights of steps to the warm East. And when they have entered the apartment to which the staircase leads their first thoughts are occupied with the people they meet there. "You here!" say Lennox and Mr. Wynn in one breath to Mr. Melvil.

"Yes, I am here," says the head of their community, gloomily.

"You here!" says Maud Hilton to Lennox, as he happens to stand by her. "I had hoped"—the colour rises into her face—"I mean understood, that you had left Khizrabad."

"I thought I would stay over to-day. I am very glad now I did."

Maud Hilton feels a sinking of the heart such as she had not experienced during the most terrible preceding

moments of that day. She understood him. He was glad that he had remained to be with May Wynn this day.

After a quick exchange of experiences—"How did you come here?" "Who would have expected that we should meet together here when we parted at the parade-ground this morning?"—Mr. Melvil leads Lennox away to the end of the long apartment in order to obtain from him a more particular account of what is going on without.

They are men of opposite character. They belong to antagonistic official schools—the non-regulation and the regulation, the autocratic and the bureaucratic. While Lennox despised the red-tape system which Mr. Melvil worked so well, Mr. Melvil had a great horror of the lawless method of administration in which Lennox had distinguished himself. But each knew that the other was a strong man. They came together instinctively in the present crisis.

Lennox can only tell that matters have got worse. "The 66th has killed its officers and joined the mutineers, and so greatly added to their strength."

"But why did not Moss come down to the city with his whole force at once?"

"He ought to have done so—got in touch with these scoundrels, and never lost touch of them until he had smashed them up."

"It is a pity he is so old."

"Yes; that is the worst of our seniority system."

"And I cannot imagine why the pursuing force from Abdoolapore is not here. They must have sent one after the mutineers."

"If they had it would have been here by this. I am beginning to think they have not sent one. Old Heaviside is nothing but a mass of flesh now. We would not keep him in the Punjâb."

"The greater need for more energetic movements here. If I and you were only with the Brigadier, out of this place!" And then the refrain which has been ringing

through his brain for so many hours finds expression in words again,—

“To think of my being in confinement here when I should be without, ordering, encouraging, directing.”

“Then we are in confinement?”

“Yes.”

“In the Nuwâb’s palace—his soldiers on guard below. Has he joined these mutineers? That would give a new aspect to the affair. I have always thought there was more than we knew in the present mutinous condition of the sepoys; the new cartridge does not explain it.”

“I am certain that the Nuwâb himself has not gone against us. He is weak and indolent, but he is no fool, and he has a keen enough eye for his own interests. It is that intriguing Sikunder Begum. In fact, the man said that it was expressly by her orders that I was put in confinement here.—*That does for her*,” he adds in an aside.

“Then we ought to try and see the Nuwâb.”

“Exactly, exactly,” says Mr. Melvil eagerly. “That is what I want to do. I am sure that if I could only get to speak to him I should be able to direct things from here—even be able to get ourselves sent up to the cantonment. But I cannot get a message sent to him. I have been down twice to the men on guard, but they only laughed at me and abused me.” The colour rose dark and red into Melvil’s face. That was a terrible experience for one accustomed to nothing from the natives but the utmost, not to say cringing, deference. “*They shall pay for that yet.*”

“And the ladies cannot possibly remain here all day long,” says Lennox, glancing down the long, bare, empty, dirty room. “Let us go down to the fellows once more. Perhaps I may be able to induce them to take the message or have it sent.”

Whether that commanding look and presence, that commanding tone of voice, which had awed furious men into obedience in situations which to Lennox himself had seemed far more critical and dangerous, would have the

same effect here, was not to be put to the test. Footsteps are now heard on the stairs, and the chief eunuch, Jhundoo Khan, with a following of three or four armed men, enters the room. Jhundoo Khan hoped hereafter to be prime minister, commander of the forces—what not; but at present he held his own post as chief of the zenana, and he took a great pleasure and pride in his duties; he had also made them very profitable. When he had been informed that two English young women had been placed in the apartment as prisoners, he had determined to visit it as soon as he could; and when he hears of the arrival of a third one he immediately hastens to it. He must take the disposal of them in his own hands at once. Here was a rare chance. Here was favour to be won of the young princes, perhaps of the Nuwâb himself. Here was money to be made. He must not let any one else take advantage of the chance—interfere here. It was his business. The moment he enters the room he takes a professional look at the three girls, standing together.

“I have come to arrange about quarters for you,” he says in his thin, shrill voice. “These young ladies cannot remain in so poor a place as this.” “The padre’s daughter is the best looking of the three,” he thinks to himself. He knows very well who the three are. He has often taken the trouble to look at them, though they have never before taken the trouble to look at him.

“I must have an interview with the Nuwâb Sahib, and that at once,” says Mr. Melvil.

“The Nuwâb Sahib is ill. He cannot be disturbed.”

“It will be better for him to be disturbed—it will be more profitable for him. You will go and inform him that I must have an interview with him and at once. It will be for his own benefit.”

“The royal bed-chamber is closed,” squeaks the eunuch; “no one dare even go near it now.”

“I command you to take him my message at once,” says Melvil, in a peremptory tone of voice.

“Command me! I will slap you across the mouth.”

Those are the words the eunuch has on his lips to utter. But he glances at May Wynn : he has conceived a great admiration for her ; he longs to make her over to somebody—sell her ; he longs to get her into his power at once. So he answers Mr. Melvil quietly.

“The Nuwâb Sahib cannot really be disturbed just now. His orders, the physician’s orders, are imperative. He has retired to his royal couch to sleep. He must have his sleep. When he has had his sleep he will be better. He will awaken in the afternoon—nay, sooner, for he has not had his midday meal. Your message shall be delivered to him then. And, in the meanwhile, if the ladies will come with me, I will take them to better apartments, properly furnished apartments, apartments cooled with tatees.”

“And these gentlemen ? ” asks Mrs. Hilton.

“Arrangements will be made for them here.”

“I will not go anywhere without my husband. I will not be parted from him,” says Mrs. Hilton decisively.

“Nor I from my father,” exclaims May Wynn.

“The apartments are in the zenana, and you know the gentlemen could not go in there,” says the eunuch.

“That is true,” says Mr. Melvil. He has no direct personal interest in the women. And he has no thought of any special danger threatening them. Their nationality will protect them. The terrible events of the Mutiny have not yet happened. As yet the white skin ensures its possessors honour and respect and security ; does not as yet mark them out for humiliation and dishonour and destruction. None of the Englishmen suspect what is in the eunuch’s mind. Had Lennox done so, most certainly it would not have gone well with Jhundoo Khan.

“I remain here,” exclaims Mrs. Hilton firmly.

“You can do that if you like,” says Jhundoo Khan, as he strokes his aged hairless chin with his long bony fingers ; “and these tender, delicate young women,” surveying the girls with his vicariously wanton eyes, “will come with me.”

“Neither I nor my daughters will be parted from my

husband," says Mrs. Hilton peremptorily, looking at the eunuch fiercely.

At this moment a man comes flying into the room, as he has come flying up the staircase, though his naked feet have made no noise upon it, and cries out to the eunuch,—

"I have found you at last. The Sikunder Begum has called you—has called you quickly. You must come to her at once. You must let nothing delay you—nothing."

"I will return as soon as I can," says Jhundoo Khan, looking at Mr. Melvil, "and it may be with an intimation from his highness the Nuwâb that he will be able to see you. Perhaps I may be able to arrange for separate apartments for you, for each family separately." A new scheme for getting them into his power has come into his head.

"You will send in something for the ladies to sit on at once," says Lennox.

"Yes, and something nice for them to eat," says the eunuch. "But I hope soon to conduct them—you all—to better apartments."

"And water," says Mr. Hilton.

"Yes—water," and the eunuch hurries away, for the Sikunder Begum rules to-day.

And now the suddenly made prisoners pass the time in more detailed narration of what has happened to them all. The Hiltons and Mr. Melvil have already interchanged experiences, but the last-comers have to hear their story and tell their own in complete detail. The narratives of Mr. Melvil and the Hiltons are the most thrilling, Lennox passing lightly over his own encounters and narrow escapes on the way to the Wynns'. The singularity of *their* experience, Mr. Wynn points out, is that they had thought that nothing very extraordinary was happening.

"It was you who were in danger of your lives," says May Wynn with a shudder, looking at Maud and Agnes Hilton. "I should have fainted had I been in your

place. I do not know how you had the courage to face that man, Mrs. Hilton ; his mere look, his appearance, would have been too much for me."

"I suppose a mother will do anything in defence of her children," says Mrs. Hilton, "and I was defending my own life too."

But they all applauded her heroic action, none more loudly than Lennox. And Maud Hilton, standing by his side, a little apart from the others, hungers to hear from him some special word of delight at her own escape from such deadly peril, but it comes not. May Wynn drops her handkerchief, and he strides forward to lift it up for her, eager to be of the smallest service to her. Maud Hilton's heart is very bitter within her. The hottest hours of the day, those succeeding noon, are now upon them, and the myriads of flies are a great torment to them. Then a troop of men arrive with bedsteads and stools, and baskets containing cakes and sweetmeats, and, what is far more welcome than all, earthenware jars of water. Lie back in your chair and close your eyes, and see how soon twenty minutes go by : and so the time slips by with them. And the fulfilment of the eunuch's promise of sending them the bedsteads and food and drink, makes them hope for the fulfilment of his other promises, and hope helps the heaviest moments by. But now a very long time has elapsed since the eunuch's hasty departure. And Mr. Melvil, the chief civil functionary, the man in highest authority, stands in a very different relation to the events of the day than any of the other men in here with him. Mr. Wynn may lament deeply the probable loss of those carefully cherished memorials of his wife and his happy married life ; Mr. Hilton may lament deeply the plunder of the Bank and of his own property ; but while Mr. Melvil may also perhaps have to lament the destruction of a splendid house and valuable property, which possess the quality, rare in India, of having been in his family for two generations back, his confinement and withdrawal from action this day mean to him what they do not to

any of the others—mean so much to him, the capable, energetic, ambitious man, in supreme authority here. The day is passing by : is he to have no share in its extraordinary and important occurrences ? He paces up and down the apartment. He cannot sit still. He cannot endure the delay any longer.

“ Will you come down with me to the guard ? I must send a man to inquire what has become of the eunuch,” he says to Lennox.

At this moment the girls jump up as they feel their seats tremble under them, and gaze at one another with terrified looks, as a low deep roar fills the apartment, notwithstanding all its closed doors.

“ It is an earthquake,” says Maud Hilton.

“ An explosion,” says Lennox ; “ it must be in the Arsenal.”

“ Can it be that our troops from Abdoolapore have arrived ? ” says Mr. Hilton excitedly. “ They may have sent a shell into the town, and it may have dropped into the powder godowns in the Arsenal.”

That being the most agreeable surmise, they adopt it.

Mr. Melvil and Lennox go down to the guard. They have not heard where the explosion was. Yes, the chief eunuch said that he was coming back shortly to remove the Feringhees to another place ; he had probably been delayed ; there was a great turmoil in the palace to-day.

The two Englishmen go upstairs again ; and as the outer air is now somewhat cooler, they open the doors, and all go out into the veranda overlooking the court. And they form groups and talk. The three girls are together, and they discuss what effect to-day's occurrences are likely to have on that great coming event in which they are all so much interested and in which they are to play leading parts—Beatrice Fane's wedding. And Mr. Hilton and his wife are together, and he is expressing his hope that if the Bank's money is gone its books at all events may be safe—one of those books is more valuable than all the gold coins lost, even though there were so many of them—and he thinks that they

must be safe. Why should they be taken away or destroyed? And Lennox and Mr. Wynn discuss the unexpected situation together. Mr. Wynn expresses his astonishment: "We in confinement! In Khizrabad! In the Nuwâb's palace! Here! What does it mean?"

"It means that this is not merely a mutiny in some of our sepoy regiments, but a great political convulsion," says Lennox thoughtfully. And Mr. Melvil is pacing up and down the veranda by himself. Again has his impatience almost passed beyond the limits of endurance, when he gives a joyful cry as he sees the chief eunuch coming in at the gateway.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE CHANGE OF QUARTERS.

THE eunuch had, as we know, told the truth when he said that the Nuwâb had shut himself up in his chamber and refused to see any one. But there was one to whom neither the Nuwâb nor those about him dared to refuse admittance. This was the Sikunder Begum. The Nuwâb has enjoyed some hours of complete seclusion and rest, when the Begum is announced. The Delight of the Palace is desirous of ascertaining from the Sun of Wealth how his disposition is now. She makes the inquiry.

"There is a great pain in my head," says the poor Nuwâb, as he rests his right elbow on his right knee, and then lays his right cheek on the palm of his right hand.

She soothes him and sympathizes with him. Truly her voice is that of the bulbul: he has often said so in verse.

"What her dearest one needs is rest."

The Nuwâb nods his head.

"What her beloved one requires is quiet."

The Nuwâb nods his head.

"A few hours more rest and quiet and the monarch of her heart will be able to hold the public durbar she has promised in his name."

"O my poor head!" groans the Nuwâb.

"Nay, we need not hold the durbar if he does not feel

equal to it. It is much desired by the leaders of the now victorious troops, but she can satisfy them. Would she not do anything to ensure her master rest ? ”

“ May every blessing rest upon you ! ”

“ But there is one document here that it is necessary for him to sign.” And she lifts up from the side of the dais the Nuwâb’s highly ornamental pen-and-ink case which is lying there as usual.

“ What is it about ? ” asks the Nuwâb.

“ His Mightiness needs rest. Why should he take the needless trouble to ask ? He has but to affix his august signature here.”

“ If you hesitate to tell me, it is the more necessary for me to know,” says the Nuwâb sharply.

“ It is the warrant for the execution of the English people now in imprisonment here.”

“ English people—in imprisonment—here ? Who are they ? ”

“ Oh, only some half-dozen men and women.”

“ Women ! women ! You would not have women slain ? ”

“ Why not ? ” says the Begum fiercely. “ Is it not the she-wolves that breed the he-wolves ? When you slay wild beasts or noxious reptiles do you stay to inquire whether they are male or female ? Do you not rather slay the female serpent ? These English shall be rooted out of the land—man, woman, and child—the whole infidel brood of them. Does not the Koran, the exalted, the revelation of the will of God, enjoin us, in many places, to destroy the infidel, to slay them wherever we find them ? ”

“ Not women.”

“ There is no distinction of sexes.”

The Begum had learnt Persian and Arabic, because of the delight she took in the exercise of her strong mental faculties, to please the Nuwâb, and because she loved distinction. She had learnt a great many passages of the Koran by heart, because of the religious merit acquired thereby ; because of the applause it brought her ; and

because of the power those authoritative utterances gave her. Most of all, because of her desire to grasp and wield their authoritative utterances, because of her strong personal pleasure in them, had she devoted herself to learning all those texts that commanded the slaying of the infidel.

“When ye encounter the unbelievers strike off their heads.”

“Kill the idolaters wheresoever ye shall find them.”

These and many other like passages does she now quote. But the Nuwâb is immovable.

“This deed would not only be wrong but foolish,” he exclaims. “It would be more in accord with good policy to treat these people well.”

“I would have them all slain, because it is commanded, and because I hate them, and above all because it is in accord with good policy. If we fail it will be better to have no one to bear witness against us. Dead people tell no tales.”

The Nuwâb then takes his stand on his complete inability, at the present moment, even to write his name. “I cannot do it.”

“Then that must serve,” says the Begum, and she traces on the paper an imitation of the pretty and curious convolution of characters which forms the Nuwâb’s signature, and which she has often amused herself and him by copying. “And that is your seal at all events,” and she takes his private seal from the writing-case and puts its impress on the paper. “She has brought great trouble on the house, and now she will bring utter destruction on it,” groans the poor Nuwâb, when she has left the room. He has often said that her voice was to him as that of the bulbul; but though he had never said it, he had often thought, as he did now, that her voice had been also in his ear as that of the ominous screech-owl.

Returned to her apartment—the beautiful octagon chamber—the Begum sends an urgent message to the chief eunuch to wait upon her at once: that was the one delivered to him in the room where the English people

were confined ; they did not know how nearly it concerned them. She is now on her dais, reclining against a heap of cushions, while the Soubahdar Rustum Khan and the chief eunuch are seated before her.

“ But here is the Nuwâb’s warrant for their execution,” the Begum is saying, as she holds up the paper.

“ The slaying of women is to me forbidden,” the Soubahdar reiterates.

“ But you have only to make the arrangements.”

“ I will not have anything to do with their death.”

“ Have you not often said that you would do anything for me ? ”

“ Anything that may become me as a man and a soldier.”

“ And are we not commanded to slay the infidel ? ” and she quotes him the texts.

“ Well, I have disobeyed too many of the good precepts of the Koran, the exalted, to be troubled about disobeying some of the severe ones. To do this deed would be against my honour.”

“ What is commanded by your religion cannot be against your honour.”

But all her arguments are in vain. Then she hints that the loss of her favour, of the Nuwâb’s favour, may mean the frustration of his ambitious hopes. “ How can you hope to command our armies, if you do not carry out our wishes—if you disobey the Nuwâb’s commands—if you are so squeamish ? ”

“ Not for the sake of anything to my personal advantage could I take part in a deed that would so shame my manhood. And it would be well if you would now give me permission to depart. I have many things to attend to.”

And she gives him permission to depart.

“ Then I will hand the warrant to you, Jhundoo Khan,” says the Begum. “ You dare not refuse to carry it out.”

“ I wonder at his Highness issuing it, or his signing it,” says the eunuch, looking at the paper.

“ Is not that his own signature—his own seal ? ”

"Yes," says the eunuch, looking at them. "But it is a pity, a great pity—they are such handsome young women," goes on the guardian and provider of the zenana reflectively.

"Ha!" says the Begum, "for that speech of yours too must they die. I will not have those white-faced women about here. You would like to gain favour and make money by them, I know. But remember, Jhundoo Khan, that if you would attain to wealth and power you can do so now only through me."

They then discuss the matter quietly.

"After I have conveyed them to their separate apartments they can be killed there. I can get plenty to do it. The men of Sheitanpara are abroad to-day. They are plying their trade in the open—are ready to do murder for hire. You will pay them well?"

"Yes." And then the Begum is silent for a while.

"No; I must see that pig of a Milmil" (Melvil) "Sahib die with my own eyes." And then she is silent again for a few minutes; and then she gives the eunuch certain directions.

When Melvil saw the eunuch enter the courtyard the last rays of the setting sun were, not flooding the land—they do not do that at this season of the year—but illuminating the heavens, and the eastern horizon glows with as bright a light as the western. A clear white light shines within the enclosures and courtyards of the palace. Melvil and the others move into the long apartment, and Melvil hastens to the end of it to meet the chief eunuch, who, having left his armed retainers at the foot of the stairs, enters it alone.

"I have come to conduct you to other apartments which I have had prepared for you." Though he does not employ the complimentary epithets, "Cherisher of the Poor," and "Sun of Wealth," and "High in Place," of which he would have been so profuse a day or two before, Melvil remarks that the tone of his voice and his manner and bearing are more polite than they have been at any previous period of the day. "We ought not to

have been put into this apartment at all. We should not have been kept here all day without any comforts, without any tatees or punkahs," says Mr. Melvil sharply. "I hope our sleeping apartments will be better."

"The best in the world—small, but you will sleep more soundly in them than you have ever slept before. Will you follow me?"

In front of the courtyard extends a wide open space which runs the whole length of the fortress, from one gateway to the other, and separates the private buildings of the palace proper, which run along the river-side or eastward battlement, from the more public buildings, which run along the westward or city-side battlement. They move across this towards the palace. They pass through a gateway and enter a pretty little garden, whose walks are paved with marble, and in which I have often lingered—as I would fain linger now—and mused on the different sensations produced by this shut-in garden and those conveyed by a garden out in the open face of nature. What a contrast, here, between the tender flowers and the hard stone, between the waving boughs and tremulous leaves of the trees and the hard, straight, firmly-fixed lines of the buildings! From the garden they enter a small inner courtyard, into which the water-course irrigating the garden runs. The water, taken off from the Jumna so many miles higher up, dashes merrily along the masonry conduit that is now conducting it back to the Jumna again—rejoicing, an Eastern writer would say, to rejoin its parent stream, as our souls ought to rejoice at the moment of death, at the moment of approaching refluence with the divine original source.

"Blest moment of release from bonds of clay,
The soul, rejoicing, heavenward wings its course,
And throwing off its vesture of decay,
The spark divine flies upward to its source."

They move along the conduit, and, in doing so, advance toward a body of men who are standing by the side of it, at the point where it turns almost at right angles in its

course. The conduit is a wide one, and has perpendicular masonry sides. They and these men are on the same side of the channel and within the angle formed by its change of direction. The eunuch, leading, passes a little way on in this new direction and then suddenly halts. The English are within the very point of the angle : the men waiting there and the eunuch's followers, six in number, suddenly form a line behind them ; they are hemmed in between them and the conduit, in a small and triangular space. The manoeuvre had been carried out as the Begum had directed.

The chief eunuch has wheeled round, and drawing his scimitar from its gorgeous scabbard, he says to Mr. Melvil, coming immediately behind him, "The orders are that you are to be killed here."

"What foolery is this ?" says Melvil sternly.

"No foolery, but the fact. You are to be killed here. These men attend to kill you. It is so ordered."

Melvil glances towards the men. They are a most villainous-looking lot, men of the lowest class, as always have been those who have done the evil deeds in such times ; and each man has in his hand a sword, or spear, or long heavy butcher's or tanner's knife ; and one or two carry matchlocks, of which they now begin to blow up the cotton matches. That action gives Melvil a sudden spasm at the heart. Nothing could give stronger confirmation of the eunuch's words, nothing could show more clearly that their death had been determined upon and prepared for. But his voice is calm and steady and dignified as he says to the eunuch, "Ordered ! The Nuwâb Sahib could never have ordered it. He would not be guilty of murder ; and he knows that our death would bring utter destruction on himself and his house."

"The warrant for your death is under his own hand and seal."

"He would never order you to slay tender women. I know the Nuwâb. He is a man of too good a disposition for that."

“ Well, it does seem a pity that such handsome young women should be killed ; but she would have it so.”

“ She ? ”

“ The Sikunder Begum. It is she who has ordered you to be killed here, under her own eyes. She is up in that balcony up there.”

Melvīl glances up at the projecting balcony, which has such full command of the spot. So, then, it is she, the female devil, with whom he has had so many a struggle, who has done this thing. He understands the Begum’s character, and knows that now for them there is no hope.

And must they die—they who had begun the day in such fullness of life ? Is death, the terrible, the dreaded, now staring them in the face ? Death, not as a release from some horrible disease—not when his advent has become indifferent to the powers of sensation, worn out by some long sickness—but death in the plenitude of life and health and strength, of capacity for feeling. Death, not as a release from poverty and sorrow and anxiety and distress, but in the midst of affluence and wealth, with full command of all the enjoyments of life. Death—death the terrible !

Life must always have a shrinking from no life.

There falls upon them all, without any thinking, the natural horror of death. Philip Lennox had never felt fear, and he does not feel it now ; but he experiences a sinking of the soul such as he has never known before. The sudden ending of his grand career—that he could have borne. He had often faced that contingency on the battle-field : to so face it had been necessary towards making it. The manner of his death—thus, and not on the battle-field—he could have borne that also. But to have the crowning boon of love, not to be won by force, given to him too, and not to be able to take it ! To have the cup of the elixir of life dashed from his lips, when he had only just tasted of its divine sweetness ! It was heart-rending. He casts a look towards May. She, too—the gentle, the beautiful, the tender—she to die,

in the bloom of her youth and beauty ; she to be subjected to this fiery trial ; she to be cast into this burning fiery furnace ; she to undergo the terror of a sudden and violent death ! The whirling brain brings up the thoughts which have most occupied it of late : God ! there is no God ! And then he casts upon the man nearest him a look which daunts and startles the ruffian, and makes him think that Lennox is about to rush upon him ; and assuredly, had Lennox been by himself, or only with men like himself, he would have rushed upon the murderers and sold his life dearly. But these women cannot be killed running about—that would add to the terror of death ; and so he folds his huge arms upon his massive chest—though that very action, as significant of the casting aside of his strength, has a great pang in it—and stands calm and still.

Agnes Hilton, the fearless, stands on her small feet fearless still ; but she gazes pitifully upon her mother and her father and on Maud.

And Maud Hilton's first thoughts, too, are for those dear others ; those others so near and dear to her—the beloved sister, whose existence has been intertwined with her own ; the dear kind mother, so beloved ; the much-loved father. Then there darts through her mind a sudden thought : so Philip Lennox and May Wynn are not to be married to one another, after all ; and she, Maud Hilton and he, are to die together—oh, joy ineffable ! And then she subdues that terrible feeling—rather it had vanished, as it came, of itself. No, she would far rather that he should live and enjoy his happiness, and her grief is greater for him than for herself : so great is the power of love.

So elastic was Mrs. Hilton's spirit, that the mere thought of the change to better apartments had made her face quite bright as they were walking along. But now a horror of great darkness falls upon her. What ! death for them, her children ! Death for them ere they have known of life—in the first sweet bloom of womanhood ! Death for Maud, with all her noble qualities ; death for her bright, fearless

Agnes; death for these, her children! She would have fallen to the ground, had she not seized her husband by the arm. "Oh, John, the girls!" she cries to him.

"What can I do?" he mutters from between his teeth, his voice hoarse with grief and with rage. And then he remembers, as in a sort of dream—in such moments not only the thoughts with which it has recently been occupied, but even those most distant and incongruous, will come into the mind—that gain of a large sum of money a day or two before: what does it profit him now?

May Wynn had cast a wild look at Lennox, and then buried her face on her father's arm; and he, bending down, had whispered in her ear, "Courage, my child! we go to meet your mother." Wynn is the weakest in body of the four Englishmen here. Though he had maintained a quiet cheerfulness, and soothed and sustained the others, he, with his weak delicate frame, had suffered more from the terrible heat and discomfort of their place of confinement that day than any even of the women. But not even Philip Lennox, with his enormous natural courage, confronted this terrible trial with so firm a front as did Cuthbert Wynn, supported by his high Christian faith. He addressed himself to the eunuch: "You will give me time to say a prayer?"

His voice sounds in poor Mrs. Hilton's ears as if it came from a long way off. And, looking at the men gathered behind them, she sees, as if in a terrible nightmare, one of them grin at her and shake his heavy knife at her, and she knows him for the man whom she had borne back down the staircase that day.

"Certainly," says the eunuch. Orientals have a great regard for religious observances: the eunuch himself prayed five times a day.

Then they all kneel down—all but Lennox—and Mr. Wynn commends their souls to God in a few earnest words. Then there is a sound of firearms—they had thought it best to shoot the big strong man—and the ruffians rush upon them, and they are hewn down to the ground. Ah

me! Lennox exhibits the fierceness of his spirit even in his death; for he leaps upon the wretch who has slain his betrothed and bears him to the ground, and grips him by the throat; and it does not need that he should throw his whole remaining strength into it to make that grip fatal. And the bubbling watercourse ran crimson with their blood.

So ended the thoughts about bridesmaids' dresses and other things. So ended that play of emotions which is so wonderful in man. So ended high ambition. So ended tender affection. So ended the delight of requited, the pangs of unrequited, love. So ended the beauty and grace of womanhood, the proud strength of man. So ended religious doubts and fears and firm religious faith. So ended hope and joy, and sorrow and disappointment.

The Sikunder Begum looked down on the bodies with satisfaction. And as she turned to re-enter her apartment she repeated her favourite maxim, "*Futteh ba Bundobust*" (word for word—*Futteh*, victory; *ba*, with, i.e. from; *Bundobust*, arrangement): "Ends are attained by a proper adjustment of means"—"Good planning gives success."

CHAPTER XXXI.

TURNED OUT.

WE have now to return to the only two left alive of the English girls whom we saw assembled together, so full of youth and hope and happiness, in the shadow of the sacred banian tree of the Hindus, in the garden planted by a Mohammedan nobleman, on the first day of our tale. We left them resting with their party on the platform of a well by the side of the road to Abdoolapore. But they cannot rest here long; they must push on; they must try and get to Abdoolapore while the favouring night-time lasts, before the inimical daylight comes. They push on again as fast as they can—push on doggedly. The climate of India is an exhausting one, and this is an exhausting time of the year, and even the men of the party are beginning to feel the effects of this many hours' tramp; they are more accustomed to riding and driving than walking. But they all bear bravely on. The men help the flagging footsteps of the women. Lilian's shoeless feet are now beginning to be very painful. The metalled portion of the road is very hard, if very smooth, and the unmetalled sides are very dusty. But they push on as fast as they can, and bit by bit they are devouring the long straight lengths of road before them. But the friendly night is passing away. The moon is beginning to wane. They are heavy with want of sleep. They are devoured with thirst. Some of them begin to feel as if their whole stock of energy was leaving them, as if they could not walk any more. They must lie

down and rest. Let them sink down in the road and sleep there. There is nothing so terrible as to continue the exertion of mind and body beyond the point of complete exhaustion; then it is that a mad irritability sets in; then the needed rest will be sought for regardless of all consequences, even at the expense of life itself—better death than this torture, this devouring of oneself. But what is that by the side of the road? A pool of water. They rush down to it. At any other time they would not have cared even to dip their fingers into it. But now they dash their hands into it, and drink of it, and bathe their faces in it. They return to the road greatly refreshed, for the water is life. They hear the sharp clatter of hoofs, and against the now brightening eastern sky they see a couple of ponies coming quickly along the road towards them. The two *tatcos* are laden high with bales and bundles, on the top of which their riders sit sideways. There is a considerable interval between the animals, but that does not prevent the riders, accustomed to passing their lives in the open air, from talking to one another.

“*Ayeh ! Bhowanee !*” says the foremost man, looking back.

“*Han, bhaee !*” (“Yes, brother!”) says the man behind, the “*bhaee*” being merely a term of friendship.

“It was in the village we have just left behind us that the three Englishmen were killed yesterday?”

The English people can see the village—a large one—standing close by the side of the road.

“Yes.”

“They were escaping from Khizrabad, were they not?”

“Yes, brother.”

“They were all three killed?”

“All three of them.”

Though the English people had seen the riders, the riders had not seen them, by reason of sitting sideways on their ponies and having their faces turned the other way. And so, when the foremost man is suddenly hailed and bid stand still in an unmistakable English voice, he starts so

violently that he nearly tumbles off his pony; he had been sitting easily at the point of balance. Hay and Major Coote step up to the pony's head.

"Did you say that three Englishmen had been killed in that village?"—pointing to it.

"Yes," says the man hesitatingly and unwillingly. He is trembling with fear. How strangely and suddenly had these English people appeared! And had he not inquired about the killing of their fellow-countrymen in a very off-hand, unconcerned way?

"Do not be afraid. We do not suppose that you had anything to do with the killing of these gentlemen."

"No, no," cries the man. "He knows we had not"—pointing to his companion, who had now come up also. "We are travellers from a distance—honest pedlars."

"We only wanted to know with reference to ourselves. Would it be safe for us to pass through the village?"

"No; you had better avoid it—better keep clear of all villages. The people about here are very evil-minded."

"You do not know who these Englishmen were?"

"No."

"Nor how they were slain?"

"No."

"How far are we from Abdoolapore?"

"Eleven miles."

"Then if we could get on six miles, get within five miles of Abdoolapore, we should be all right?"

"No; the villages immediately round Abdoolapore and near it are the worst of all. The English people there are in a state of siege."

"Ha!"

"That way," goes on the man, pointing northward, "lies a heavy jungle. You had better get to it and lie concealed there during the daytime, and then move on in the evening and steal into Abdoolapore in the course of the night. You had better get to the jungle as soon as you can; the day is breaking and the people will soon be moving about."

"How does this jungle lie?"

“ That way. That big peepul-tree is not far from the edge of it. We must now move on. We have a long way to go before the heat of the day sets in,” and they rattle their heels on their ponies’ flanks and move briskly off. The fugitives now leave the road and make for the peepul-tree, which lies almost at right angles to it, and about three-quarters of a mile off. The splendid sacred tree looms up large against the sky. Beyond it lies about half a mile more of the cultivated tract, and then comes the scrub or jungle. They pass into the tangled wilderness of trees with a great sensation of relief; they can now no longer be seen from half a mile off. They move on and on until they have got well away from the border, well into the heart of it. The morning is now breaking. They have reached a place where the trees stand very thickly together, and here they determine to rest. They cast themselves down on the hard bare ground, and so experience one of the most delicious sensations of their lives. What an active delight is there in the mere sensation of non-exertion. But they do not enjoy it for long. They are soon fast asleep. They have soon passed into the vast refuge-hall of sleep. They have soon sunk beneath the renovating waters of oblivion. The sun has risen a good way above the horizon, the rays which have fallen upon them warm, from the beginning, are now beginning to be hot; the west wind, which will soon increase to a fiery gale, is beginning to stir the dust about them, and still they continue to sleep. Then Coote awakens, and sits up with his back against a tree. Well, the early morning cup of tea would be very pleasant, certainly; but he could do without that, would not be troubled at the thought of having nothing to eat, if he only had his cigar-case or pipe in his pocket. That is the want that troubles him. He has often lain out under a tree before, and his pipe has been to him as meat and drink and lodging. It is a great bore to have nothing to smoke. He yawns and rubs his eyes, and then a rustle catching his quick hunter’s ear, he looks up expecting to see a blue cow or an antelope, or

it may perchance be a pig or a wild boar; but he sees instead a group of natives standing before him. He leaps up and draws his sword and arouses Hamilton, who has been sleeping next him, with a strong kick; and then there is a great commotion, a calling and crying, and awakening of one another, and the four Englishmen are standing together in a group with their drawn swords in their hands, while the women shelter behind them. The coming months are to present many a group such as that on the face of the land. Beatrice, standing a little apart by herself, sees the foremost man of the group of natives—he carries a gun, which Coote notes with surprise is not the ordinary matchlock of the country, but an excellent English rifle—sees him looking at her with great kindness—a kindness she does not like.

“We have no desire to do you any harm,” says the man, with his eyes fixed on Beatrice. He is a stout man, and speaks in a soft muffled tone of voice.

“I see you are officers,” he goes on, now looking at the men. “I suppose you belonged to the regiments stationed at Khizrabad?”

“Yes; I was in command of the 76th Regiment, in which this gentleman”—pointing to Hay—“was also an officer.”

“A very bad regiment,” says the fat man bluntly.

“And you are now on your way to Abdoolapore, and are in hiding here during the daytime; I understand.”

They were in hiding, but it was not pleasant to be told so. There was a terrible humiliation in having to lurk about the land through which they had hitherto made only lordly progress. That it was a superiority of race which enabled us to conquer and hold India and rule it well; that this superiority was intensely, delightfully felt by the English in India; that it was strongly, irksomely felt by the natives; that these feelings had a great influence in the stir of the passions of this Mutiny time; that they added to the fierce satisfaction of the overthrow

and slaughter, to the fierce delight of the bloody reprisal: these, to me, at all events, are undoubted facts.

"We are resting here," says Coote quietly.

Except in the matter of colour, this big bluff man might have served as a good representative of our own King Hal; he had the same face and figure, the same big cheeks and pursed-up little mouth, the same look of strength and sensuality.

"You cannot keep those delicate ladies"—fixing his large black eyes on Beatrice—"out here in the sun and the hot wind all day long, and without anything to eat or drink. It is not safe for them, and you, to be out in the open. Three Englishmen were slain in a village not far from this yesterday. You had better come with me to my house. I live in a *poorwa* (outlying hamlet) which I have recently established myself, and which is inhabited only by myself and my brethren. You will be quite safe there. The people in the villages about here are very treacherous and cruel. I see; you are thinking why should I not be the same. But I do not belong to these parts. I have only settled here. I am not a Goojur or a Ranghur" (scornfully), "but a Rajpoot. You may trust me. If I wanted to do you any harm, why, I could easily shoot you men with my gun—shoot you down like deer."

"A man with a gun certainly has the advantage over us," says Major Coote bitterly.

"You had better come to our village and remain there during the daytime, and we will escort you into Abdoolapore at night."

There seems nothing else to do. If so the man wishes it, so must they do.

"You do not mean to deal deceitfully by us?"

"No."

"Will you swear that you do not wish to injure us?"

"*Bap ki kusm—Beta ki kusm*" ("I swear it by my father—I swear it by my son").

"Very good; then we will go with you."

It is with a strange sensation that they move away with

him. Again are they embarked on a new adventure. What will the end of this one be? The possibilities of strange adventures are about us all, continually, everywhere; but still most of us pass quietly through the various stages of life, glide quietly down the stream of existence, which for most of us has a very equable, calculable flow. Most especially was this the case in India with those in "the service," with its fixed and certain rates of pay and pension, its determined periods of leave and furlough and retirement. The passage of those in the civil or military service of the East India Company from Haileybury and Addiscombe to India and then back to Cheltenham and Bath, was like the passage of the East Indiamen from London to Calcutta and back: there might be shipwreck, but most people, most vessels, passed over the well-known portions of the route in the usual times, and accomplished it with the usual alternations of good and bad days safely. The Mutiny came as a terrible break. The lives of all those fugitives had hitherto moved on well-known roads, along well-known channels. Then, suddenly, during the last two days, they had found themselves launched upon unknown and dangerous streams and pathways. Whither would this new track, this new channel, lead them? How should they fare upon it?

Major Coote thinks very well, when he finds that their new fat friend is a great sportsman, a "devoted votary of the chase"—to use the older, more stately phraseology. He was now out after antelope. The two are soon deep in sporting talk. Sportsmanship forms a very strong common bond. The fat man is very proud of his rifle. That leads to a talk about guns; that to one about powder and shot, which lasts until they have reached the burly man's newly-established settlement, a mile and a half away.

The settlement consists as yet of half a dozen houses only. There are some very fine trees, the remains of some primeval forest or ancient grove, about it; and it stands by the side of a little lake. Its shadiness, its quiet seclu-

sion, and its smallness are all very agreeable to the fugitives. It was the admirable conjunction of the lake and the trees, and the vicinity of the forest, the stout man points out in his friendly talk, which had led him to establish this hamlet here. The vicinity of the forest was agreeable to him, not only as a sportsman but as a cultivator, a householder. Manure for the land, fodder for the cattle, fuel for the house, are the chief wants throughout the country-side in India. The jungle afforded him an ample supply of fuel, so that he need not use his cow-dung in that way, but add it to his manure-heap; and also admirable grazing ground for his cattle.

"You must remain a little while under these trees until I can arrange in what houses to place you. My house is not large enough to accommodate you all. We will distribute you two and two. These two young ladies shall go into my own house."

Some of the men with him exchange amused glances.

The stout man is very much of a gay Lothario. He resembles our bluff King Hal in disposition and in character, as well as in face and person. He is notorious for his want of conjugal fidelity. This has cost him much, in domestic trouble as well as in money. However, just now he and his companions bustle about to make their new-found guests comfortable immediately and where they are. They bring out stools and bedsteads for them to sit upon. They bring them water and milk. They bring them sweetmeats. The fat man brings a large leaf full of *luddos* and *peras*, and presses them on Beatrice, looking at her the while with a tender solicitude—much too tender a solicitude. At any other time the English people would not have touched these bazaar-made sweetmeats; but just now they are very hungry, and they find them very welcome. And the milk is fresh and the water cool. And although the heat and the glare are beginning to be great, and the hot wind beginning to blow, the very thick umbrage of the trees affords them considerable shelter from them. And they have not yet recovered from the

fatigue of the night before, and the sensation of merely sitting still is delightful. The remote and secluded situation of the little settlement affords them a delightful feeling of security. The trees under which they are seated stand immediately in front of the zemindar's own dwelling-place, and though he had proposed only to accommodate the two girls in it, they see that it looks big enough to take them all in in case of need, and that, like all the better classes of houses in the East, it is built with a view to security and defence. They could hold their own in it against a mob. And so they drink their milk and eat their sweetmeats with great satisfaction. Those not disturbed by the stout man's looks think their troubles at an end. That disturbance affects Beatrice alone, but unfortunately it increases with the satisfaction of her companions. Her face, relieved of the dust and grime of the night before, shines forth in all its glorious beauty. The hopeful looks and words of her companions make it shine forth all the more. And the brighter it becomes the more tender and assiduous—and they are already tender and assiduous enough—do the stout man's attentions grow. "See how her beauty has overpowered him! The fever of love is upon him, and he is losing his senses," remarks one of the villagers to another, out of hearing of every one else. Alas for the beauty of woman and all the trouble it has produced! "You must have some more sweetmeats. I will go and get you some more; some very excellent ones," says the stout man to Beatrice, looking at her most tenderly; and he hurries away to the house.

Though the stout man was indeed, as he said, a Rajpoot, he was not one of the highest class, and though now a landed proprietor, the owner of one or two villages, he had begun life in a humble capacity, and had made his money by some Government contracts. His wife had not attained to the dignity of a zenana until he had been able to build this house. It was only then that she had given up the marketing without and the cooking at home. And now, because her hands and face had grown coarse in her hus-

band's service, he must, forsooth, be always seeking for softer ones! Issuing out of the gateway, the fat man has still his back to the house, as he bends before Beatrice and holds out the big dry leaf piled with some luscious confection towards her, and says, in tender accents which make his voice sound more muffled than ever: "Take one of these"—when "Take that!" sounds upon his ear, and he receives a cuff on the back of the neck which sends him staggering forward, and all the sweetmeats are scattered in the dust.

"And out of this, you!" shouts a tall strong woman, who had flown out of the house and rushed toward them like a tornado.

"Out of this, you!" and she hoists up one end of the bedstead and tumbles Beatrice off it, and as Mrs. Fane runs forward to lift Beatrice up the virago pours upon them both a torrent of that filthy personal abuse for which the East is famous, but of which, luckily, mother and daughter do not comprehend a single word.

"Be off, you white-faced ——! Begone, you old ——!" exclaims the furious woman; and then there is a great commotion. The Englishmen all jump up. Hay rushes forward and places himself by the side of Beatrice. But the turmoil is soon assuaged by her who had aroused it, as a magician allays the tumult of the waves with his wand. The enraged wife has obtained possession of a wand too, a most effective one. She has seized the solid bamboo club belonging to one of the men, and swings it round her head with her strong arm.

"In with *you*!" she cries to her husband, pointing towards their house with the club. "In with you at once!" The stout man turns his face away from them all, and moves towards the house with abject footsteps, and disappears within the gateway.

"And now you get out of this village, the whole pack of you—every one of you. Be off with you, be off!"

"Be off with you at once!" she cries, advancing towards the English people, who have now got together in a group,

with a most menacing flourish of her club. "Away, you sons of swine!" she cries, looking at the men. "Away, you breeders of swine!" she cries, looking at the women.

"Now that she has put aside the veil, and come out of the zenana, you will not be able to remain here any longer," says one of the men to Coote. "She is a terrible woman, and very strong, and she will fall upon you with the club if you try to oppose her. She might do the women with you an injury, perhaps a fatal one: she is very powerful."

"We must go," says Coote, and they move out from under the pleasant umbrage of the trees.

"Begone! Out of this! Away with you! Begone!" shouts and bellows this maddened wife. (An utter abandonment to the emotions is, I think, more common in the passionate East than with us; women drown themselves in India on very slight provocation.) As she follows them, flourishing the staff furiously, all the men of the hamlet hold back. "Aroynt! Be off! Begone!" she shouts, as she follows them to the edge of the little settlement, which it does not take them long to reach. And she stands there until she has seen them well out of sight. And so ended that adventure—rather ignominiously.

CHAPTER XXXII.

TREACHERY.

THEY have nothing to do but pursue the pathway by which they have left the hamlet. At first it passes across a cultivated tract, where the earth is quite dry and hard and bare, but where there are trees for the eye to rest on. Then it brings them to the edge of a barren plain, which stretches away before them as far as the eye can reach. These great plains, quite bare or covered with scrub; the cultivated tracts; and large shallow lakes, now almost dry, make up the face of the land.

When they have got on to the plain they seem to have entered a sea of fire. The flaming sunlight burns, and blisters, and blinds them. The waves of light, moving with such terrific force, pass in through the opening of the eyes and beat with maddening force in the dark caverns of the brain. The hot dust blinds them and chokes them. There is nothing for the eye to rest on: it wearies with gazing into nothingness. The level plain is ever the same, and still the same. They are moving onward, slowly but still moving onward, and yet they seem not to move onward at all—seem to be fixed at the centre of a huge wide circle, seem to be stationary, seem to be standing still beneath the apex of the vast unbroken vault of the sky. There is not a tree or a shrub upon the plain. Its smooth monotony is broken only by the clouds and pillars of dust. And so they move onward in great suffering. The heat is terrible, the glare terrible, the dust terrible. They endure

still greater suffering, as the sun, having reached the zenith—at this season of the year he rides very nearly straight overhead in that latitude—begins to descend from it: for those three first hours of the afternoon constitute the worst time of the day. It is the period of accumulated heat: the earth and air are surcharged with it, and the sun continues to pour down his fiery shower with scarcely diminished violence. And so they move on beneath the flaming fiery sword of the sun, which has such power to slay, as many a poor Englishman or Englishwoman was to prove in the coming months. Some of them feel giddy, some sick; to some the clods by the side of the road are of a bloody hue; some have a buzzing in the ears; and others, when they close their eyes against the glare, hear the distant chiming of bells. The skin is beginning to peel off their hands and faces, which are burnt and blistered to the point of agony. The soft arms and shoulders of the women are simply a mass of pulp. And still they strive to keep on as cheerily as they may, striving to talk and even to laugh, which the severe burning of the muscles round the mouth renders a very painful process.

No murmur escapes the lips of these worthy representatives of England's womanhood: brave and cheerful are the words that issue from the lips of these worthy representatives of England's manhood. William Hay is even gay. Now is the time to play the Christian hero. Now is the time to give proof of the sustaining power of his principles. That they are officers, and gentlemen, and Englishmen, and have to bear themselves worthily as such, is common to them all; but each of the men has some distinctive quality that sustains him individually. With Hay, as has been said, it is his ideal of the Christian hero, his godliness. Fane is supported by his pride. Coote displays the endurance, the power of sustaining fatigue, the toughness of the huntsman, the tracker of big game. Hamilton's is youthful pluck. But they get over the ground, the burning ground, very slowly. Poor Lilian's thin stockings are worn away. She hobbles over

the burning marl on bare and bleeding feet, unmurmuring—she, the child, not the least heroic of them all. Seeing the pain, the torture with which she moves, the difficulty with which she moves at all, two of the men ultimately make a “cat’s cradle” with their arms, and carry her so. They continue on that barren plain until late in the afternoon; it was a prolonged torture, but there has been one advantage in it, they have had the road all to themselves. Only very strong necessity would lead any one, even a native of the land, to be out upon it during those terrible midday hours.

But now they have arrived at its end, and at the beginning of another closely cultivated, densely inhabited tract. They dare not show themselves on the latter. So large a party as theirs cannot hope to escape observation. Now is the time that the people will be moving about. It seems to them providential that just beyond its commencement lies a large dense mango-grove. They determine to take shelter in this until the evening time. As they pass into the coolness and darkness of the grove, comparative only though these be, they experience a most exquisite pleasure, a pleasure similar to that of the passing away of a horrible pain. As they make their way into its innermost depths, and throw themselves down on the ground at the foot of two trees, how exquisite the sensation of the relief from labour, how keen the delight of rest, rest to the overworked limbs, the overtried brain, the overwrought will! They have no longer to carry their wearied frames, to bear themselves upright. They are witting only of rest; mind, body, and soul, all three, seem to have passed away into it, been dissolved in it. It is difficult to describe the sensation, even though I have experienced it; difficult to describe it, because it is nothingness. They have seen with delight that the grove is an isolated one, has no village near it. And so they abandon themselves to that delightful rest.

But they do not enjoy it for long. They have soon not only entered upon but passed through a new adventure:

they suddenly find themselves set upon and disarmed, and hustled, and roughly handled, and most effectually robbed. Their approach to the grove had been noticed by some Ranghurs, members of one of the most violent, and lawless, and predatory tribes of that quarter, who had themselves previously taken shelter from the heat in the grove, and were seated at its farther end. They send one of their body, a celebrated tracker—every Ranghur is a robber—to make closer observation of the fugitives. He creeps up to within a dozen yards of them entirely unsuspected.

“What is the hour, Fane?” says Major Coote, looking at his timepiece; “my watch has stopped.” “It is a quarter to four,” says Major Fane, drawing out his large gold watch and looking at it. The three-quarter naked native, lying quiet on his stomach behind a tree, notes the watch and chain—notes also that there is a very handsome ring on a finger of the hand that holds it. Fane was fond of rings. The epaulettes and sword-belts of the men are not difficult to see; but his keen eye has also caught the sparkle of gems. Mrs. Fane and Beatrice both have very handsome and valuable diamond guard-rings on their fingers; Mrs. Fane has also a gold chain about her neck. This party is decidedly worth the robbing. He then notes the position of the men, and of the trees around them, very carefully, and then glides away again, unseen, unheard. And not long afterwards he and another man, as lean and lithe and lissome, and almost as stealthily as himself, are lying behind the huge trunks of two of the trees. And now they have run forward on their bare noiseless feet, and Fane and Coote, reclining not far from one another, are under the surprise of their sudden appearance, when this head tracker of the gang, the man who had observed them and settled what he should do, has whipped up both their swords and leapt away with them. It was very cleverly done. The man had certainly carried out his part most dexterously and successfully: he had displayed great cleverness, boldness, and agility; he was

notorious for these—very quick of head and hand and foot. His less gifted companion does not make the affair, the disarmament, as complete as it was meant to be: he gets hold of only one sword, that belonging to young Hamilton. Hay foils him in the attempt to seize his. But still enough has been done. The Englishmen have been rendered practically powerless. One man by himself cannot fight as four men together would have fought. And the moment the chief tracker had dashed away with the swords the remaining members of the gang, who had moved up as near as they could, came running and leaping down the leafy aisles, and the Englishmen find themselves in rough strong hands, and being robbed by nimble fingers; and their watches are conveyed, and the epaulettes taken off their shoulders, and even the buttons cut off their coats, “before they know where they are.” And now is Mrs. Fane’s proud spirit wounded as she feels those rough hands about her person. She starts away from the ruffian who is striving to pull the chain from off her neck. “I will give it to you,” she says. And then she has to take her rings off and hand them to him, otherwise she sees quite plainly that he would pull them off himself with his rough fingers: he will have every one of them, not only her engaged ring, that splendid and valuable half-hoop of diamonds, but even her wedding-ring, by her most valued of them all—she has to part even with that. “Off with it!” cries the man, as she says that it is of no great value and begs that it may be spared her. “Is it not of gold?” They are very thorough robbers, these. As has been said, they even cut the buttons off the men’s uniform jackets. The girls too have to part with their trinkets: Beatrice with her loved engagement ring, Lilian with her much-prized first watch. And then the fellows have disappeared, and the Englishmen find themselves standing there, deeply humiliated and deprived of their weapons, for the robbers have carried off their swords. There comes over them a feeling of helplessness such as they had not experienced before. With their swords they had felt that they

could fight a mob, at all events overawe it. But now they would be no match for half a dozen men armed with clubs. And the women understand this too, and this helplessness of the men is added to their own natural load of helplessness.

They have toiled on all through the fierce heat of the day, all through the fierce dry gale, all through the clouds of choking dust, without having had a drop of water to drink. They are faint, ill, with thirst. "Oh, for a drop of water to moisten the parched lips!"—that is the thought of every one, but the saying of none. They all maintain a proud silence. None of them will complain.

"Pride in their port, defiance in their eye,
I see the lords of human kind pass by,"

was written of the English long before their conquest of India; but there is no doubt that the conquest and rule of that vast land have tended to enhance that feeling of race superiority, more especially in those immediately concerned in that rule. No doubt that feeling often displays itself in India in vulgar, odious forms; but if the feeling has its weak and detestable, it has also its strong and admirable side. To it, to the strength of body and of mind to which it is attributable, are due those strenuous labours in the office, the court of justice, and the field, such as were never paralleled in India before, and which the natives of the land themselves shrink from, do not hold worth the enduring, even if they could endure them; from it, from the sense of it, have come those noblest of our acquisitions in India, our name for uprightness and justice. Long may the English continue to hold an opinion which leads them to be upright and just! Long may they continue to consider any shrinking from danger and hardship as incompatible with that superiority of race! Long may they consider it due to themselves to display superior qualities, a superior honesty and a superior justice, a superior courage and a superior endurance of hardship, in India!

After the exchange of some few words they seat themselves quietly down again to await the coming of the solitude and safety of the night. They may now hope to escape molestation during the few remaining hours of daylight. Major Coote had gathered that the robbers had come from a distance. "It was a good thing we thought of resting here for half an hour," one of the fellows had said as they were moving away. There is no village within sight. The vast barren plain stretches on one side; a long reach of the flat open unfenced fields, just now barren too, extends on the other.

So they sit patiently resting for some time, when they are disturbed by the sound of a human voice. They may expect a stray traveller or two to pass into the grove, but they do not mind that. What attracts their attention now is that the man seems to be chaunting or reading aloud. It is some one reading aloud. There is the nasal intonation, the continued rise and fall of the voice, with which orientals read, especially read poetry. They are surprised that any one should be reading aloud in such a place as this. They are still more surprised when, the voice getting nearer and nearer, the reader himself comes in view, passing slowly down the pillared aisle of shade parallel to the one in which they have seated themselves. He is a young man, curiously dressed. Around his person are the flowing yellow garments of a Brahmin priest; on his head is the biretta of a Catholic priest; on his feet a pair of patent-leather boots. Though they can now, of course, hear him quite plainly, they do not understand what he is reading. From the shape of the book, or rather collection of pages, he carries in his hand, Major Coote guesses, and guesses rightly, that he is reading the Hindu Scriptures. The young man is, in fact, reciting a sloka of the Vedas; but the sonorous Sanscrit tongue is not known to any of the Englishmen present. The young native is entirely absorbed in the reading, the reciting, of the sacred verses, and he does not observe the seated fugitives until he is within a few yards of them; and so they have time to

make minute observation of him. The colour of his skin is very fair; he has a long aquiline nose, and a long retreating forehead, and a long projecting chin. His face is much thrust forward, for he has a very strong forward bend or stoop in his tall thin narrow-shouldered frame. He is pacing slowly along. And now a sesquipedalian Sanscrit word is stopped in his mouth as he gazes at them with a look of astonishment. He has large projecting eyes. He pulls up short, and then advances towards them with a peculiar long gliding step. Having observed the patent-leather shoes much affected by the educated (i.e. English educated) native youth, they are not much surprised when the young man addresses them with, "Goot evening, ladies!" "Goot evening, gentlemen!" and they expect him to ask where they have come from; but they are astonished at the form of the questions which he now pours upon them in his rapid fluent voice: "What you do here? In these deserts vast and antres wild? What you do here under the shadow of these melancholy boughs? What bring your wandering footsteps here? Where you come from? Where you go to? As Carlyle say, 'Whence? and ah! whither?' As Shakespeare say, 'That is the question.' "

"Who are you?" asks Hay, by way of counter question—and looking at the young man curiously.

"A servant of the Lord and a seeker after righteousness," replies he.

"But what are you?"

"A student and a searcher for the truth."

"You are a Brahmin?"

"Yes," says the young fellow proudly; "but I not idolater. I educated in missionary school. I study every religion—Hindu, Christian, Mohammedan. I read the Bible, the Koran, and the Shasters," and he lays his hand on the long narrow leaves he holds in his hand. "Plenty good in all religions, plenty bad. Take the good of every religion and leave the bad, and make new religion. I make new religion."

In India and the East new sects and religions are constantly springing up: some to take root and flourish, and grow up into widespread systems; most to wither and perish after a brief and narrow existence. But whether this young man will hereafter come to lie in a sacred shrine, a holy sepulchre, and be worshipped as a saint, a prophet, or a god, is of much less interest to the fugitives than whether at the present moment he is more likely to help them or hurt them; whether he might not get them some water to drink. Educated in an English school, and speaking the English language, he will most likely be friendly.

“Do you live near here?”

“Yes; my village is contiguous. I make supposition that you come from Khizrabad.”

“Yes; we have come from Khizrabad.”

“On shanks’ mare?”

The natives of India who have learned English are fond of using such phrases, in order to redeem their conversation from pedantry and give it a light colloquial air.

“Yes; we have come on foot.”

“Many English people killed in Khizrabad—too much blood flow there. Very terrible, very bad. All men should love one another and not hate one another—that more proper. No man hurt another. That the true religion—that I teach. All men are brothers, members of same body: should love one another, help one another—that I teach. Whence?—from Khizrabad. Whither?—to Abdoolapore?”

“Yes; we are making for Abdoolapore. How far is it from here?”

“Eight mile as crow fly. Nine or ten mile by the road over Hindun bridge. You bring no attendants?”

“No.”

“Have to run away too fast?”

The young man’s wandering glance has been turned curiously on each of them by turns, but it has rested longest on Major Fane; and now, as Fane puts his glass

into his eye and scrutinizes this would-be founder of a new religion, he exclaims,—

“ ’Tis strange, most strange, ’tis passing strange. I very much bewilder and confuse. Is not this the gentleman in charge of Khizrabad magazine? Methinks I saw him when I went to see the Arsenal.”

“ Yes; I was in charge of the Arsenal at Khizrabad,” says Fane.

“ But I hear Arsenal blown up, and everybody in it killed.”

“ Yes; the Arsenal was blown up, but this gentleman was not blown up with it,” says Hay; “ though it is most wonderful that he was not.”

“ And I see you no weapons have; no swords by side, no guns, no pistols in pocket? ”

“ No; we are quite unarmed.”

“ Helpless as babes? ”

“ Not quite that, I hope.”

“ And you bring nothing to eat with you? ”

“ No.”

“ Then you are very hungry, ‘ Hunger in their rear, confusion in their van ; ’ no—‘ confusion in their rear, hunger in their van.’ I forget. You very hungry? ”

“ Not so hungry as thirsty. We are very thirsty. We have been walking in the sun for many hours, and have not had a drop of water to drink.”

“ Plenty wells.”

“ We have nothing to draw the water with.”

“ I compassionate you very much, very much indeed. Hunger and thirst—very bad thing, terrible thing. In all religions it say, ‘ Give food to the hungry and drink to the thirsty.’ I teach that.”

“ Have you got your *lotah* [drinking-vessel] with you? ” says Major Coote.

The *lotah* is so made that, by tying a string round the neck, you can draw water with it from a well, as the natives always do. No native ever travels without his *lotah*.

"No," says the young man, "my village not far. I came here only for a short time, in order to read holy book and meditate under these trees, in this vast continuity of shade."

"D—n his jaw! I wish he had brought his lotah!" cries Coote, impatient, to young Hamilton.

"But you all very hungry? You all very thirsty?"

"Yes; very," says Coote curtly.

"Then why you not come to my village? It not far. There we give you food and drink. Plenty good water there."

"We wish to avoid villages. We have heard that other English people have been ill-treated in some of the villages about here."

"Yes; they kill them three Englishmen. Very bad people those. Very wrong to kill anything, even insect. But those people evil-minded people, thieves and robbers. People in my village all Brahmins, like myself. They not hurt you, but help you. I take care of you. I educated in missionary school. I fond of English people."

Fane and Coote and Hay confer together apart for a few minutes. They decide that it will be best to accept the offer of the young religious enthusiast. They are very hungry and terribly thirsty. They have no means of procuring water for themselves.

They accompany him across the fields, on which so rich and lush a harvest waves in the autumn and winter months, but which now lie so hard and dry, so barren and bare, devoid of all herbage; and on them hard and dry rests the hard dry evening light. The young Hindu discourses continually, his flow of talk seems ceaseless, and everything seems to produce a quotation. He looks at Lilian hobbling along on her cut and bleeding feet, and he says, "She move as Goldsmith say, 'with painful steps and slow.'"

"That barren plain must be a very wide one," says Hay, as he glances back towards it on first leaving the grove.

" Yes; it is ' a wild immeasurably spread.' "

" You have plenty of wells here," says Major Coote, as they advance farther into the fertile tract.

" Yes; yet for you is ' water, water everywhere, and not a drop to drink! ' "

" Yes, certainly, without something to draw it with," says matter-of-fact Major Coote.

The young man discourses at large about his new religion, in which, as he informs them, " mercy and truth have met together, justice and peace have kissed together."

" Peace upon earth and goodwill towards men," he quotes.

" But to thyself be true, and thou canst not then be false to any man," he quotes.

And now the tree-encircled village comes in view, and now they have reached it. The *choupal*, or guest-house, generally placed in the precincts, stands on this side of the village, and it is the first house they come to. The young Brahmin leads them into it. Usually the *choupal* consists simply of a long open shed without any furniture in it (the Indian traveller carries his bedding and cooking apparatus with him), with some trees and an open space for the traveller's carts and cattle, his riding horse or his driving bullocks, in front of it. But, as we have said, this tract of country was largely occupied by predatory tribes, with whom cattle-lifting was a hereditary and highly honoured occupation. The space in front of the *choupal* here had therefore been enclosed by a strong fence, with a gateway in it. The young Brahmin, the founder of the new religion, in which universal benevolence was to be the cardinal principle—" ' Quenchless desire of universal happiness,' as Shelley say," to quote the young fellow's words—having led them through the gateway and up to the house, takes his departure, saying, " I will now go and get you some things to sit upon and something to eat and drink." Moving into the village, he encounters three or four men; the string over their shoulders—they have nothing on but their skull-caps and their loin-cloths—indicates that they are Brahmins.

"There are seven Christians in the choupal," he says to them exultingly.

"Seven Christians?"

"Yes; three women and four men."

"How did they get here?"

"*I* brought them!" in a tone of great triumph. "Is it not a great haul?" (Of course, he is now using, not English, but Hindustanee colloquialisms.)

"As how?"

"Has not the Nuwâb Sahib placed a reward of a hundred rupees on the head of every English person? It is a haul of seven hundred rupees for us, for the village; and *I* did it—*I* lured them hither."

"But we have to get them into Khizrabad."

"The men are not armed. But still, if we tried to take them into Khizrabad ourselves, they would resist and injure some of us. They are great fighters, these English—great fighters, even with their fists; and some of the men might escape by running away. I have thought of all this—I have brains. I will mount one of our mares and ride into Khizrabad at once. I will return early to-morrow morning, accompanied by a troop of the Nuwâb's cavalry, and we will make our prisoners over to them. You must keep charge of them during the night. Feed them well, and get them to sleep. Tell them what you like. Now that they are in the choupal they are like birds in a trap, like fish in a net. They cannot struggle or escape as they would in the open. They can only get out at the gate; close it, and place a man at it with a sword—there are two swords in the village. It was *I* who lured them hither." He has poured all this out with his usual rapidity of speech. And then he hurries away to get the mare. He will not send any one else into Khizrabad. *He* must be the sole hero of this adventure. Vanity was the leading trait in this young man's character, and it was so far to his credit that, in his betrayal of the English, he was actuated more by the desire for *éclat* than for gain. He desired to obtain the reward as much for

the sake of the community as his own. He was greedy of praise ; and he should obtain it, not only from his village brethren, but from the Nuwâb. While he hurries in one direction, two of his Brahmin brethren hurry to the choupal, picking up clubs as they go, while the others proceed to get some charpoys for the entrapped fugitives to sit and sleep on, food for them to eat, water for them to drink. And those fugitives are soon busily engaged in the delightful occupation of washing their hands and faces, and drinking—how they do drink, and drink, and drink ! And though the cold unleavened cakes are like leather, and the sweetmeats are stale, they find the occupation of eating a very pleasant one too, for they are very hungry. And so they munch away at the parched grain and suck away at the lumps of coarse sugar which are its usual accompaniment, and drink again at the cold water. The young Brahmin has certainly carried out his promise of providing them with food and drink. They wonder that he has not come himself to act the part of host. They inquire for him.

“ He has been obliged to go to a neighbouring village on some business—he will be back in an hour or two,” says one of the ready-lying Brahmins. It is very pleasant to rest and eat and drink, but the main desire with every one, most especially with Major Fane and his wife and Hay, is to find themselves within the safe precincts of Abdoolapore. So Coote says to one of the Brahmins: “ Now that we are refreshed, thanks to your kind hospitality, for which we shall not forget to make due acknowledgment, we must be proceeding on our way. How far is it to Abdoolapore ? ”

“ About nine miles.”

“ I suppose we should have to go along village tracks ? ”

“ Yes ; there is no highway near.”

“ You could send a man with us to guide us ? ”

“ Yes ; but we could send no one with you to protect you. There are only five or six of us now in the village. It is not a large village, and most of our men are away on

pilgrimage just now—so you must not think of moving for another hour or so. You must wait until all the people have retired to the villages. You know that these Ranghurs and Goojurs who inhabit the villages about here are great rascals—they would kill you simply because you are Feringhees—they killed three of your countrymen yesterday. You had better not venture out until later on.”

“Nine miles—we could do that in three hours. We can wait until 10 o’clock—that would be neither too early nor too late.”

And so they settle.

They pass the time in finding out from the Brahmins all they know about the recent occurrences at Khizrabad. What they have to tell is not pleasant for English ears to hear—makes them not the less anxious to be within the safe precincts of Abdoolapore. Surely it must be 10 o’clock. They have no watches now, but they can judge by the position of the moon.

“We must now be going,” says Hay to the Brahmin who seems to be told off to deal with them. “Will you let us have a man to show us the way?”

“Will you not wait until Nund Coomar”—that was the name of the young Brahmin who had brought them thither—“has returned?”

“We should like to see him again very much, but we cannot wait. We have not far to go, but these ladies are very tired and footsore and can walk but slowly.”

“That is just it,” says the lying-tongued Brahmin, the priestly agriculturist. “Nund Coomar has gone to the house of a friend who has a bhylee” (kind of carriage), “and he will bring it back with him for the use of these ladies—he was much touched with their condition.” (Nund Coomar’s new religion of universal benevolence affords much amusement to his brethren, to his fellow-priests and co-proprietors of the lands of the village.) “He will now be back very soon.”

They know that with Lilian walking is simply torture. And Mrs. Fane and Beatrice too are very footsore; their

feet too are cut and blistered ; to them, too, to-day, the walking over the burning ground at noon has been torture. The carriage would enable *them* to get on so much faster that it seems worth their while to wait for it; they would save time thereby. And the Brahmin engages their attention with the narration of some incident—real or invented—of the outbreak at Khizrabad. And then they say they must be off; and then he says that he will send a man to the border of the village to listen if the carriage is coming. But now the moon is nearing the zenith, and they insist that they can wait no longer.

“Why should you undertake this troublesome and dangerous walk?” says the smooth-tongued Brahmin. “These poor women are very weary, that poor child’s feet are very sore; your best plan will be to remain here where you are comfortable and safe, and we will send a man into Abdoolapore to inform your friends there of your condition, and they will send out soldiers and carriages who will take you all in safely and comfortably.”

“We would rather walk in than wait,” says Mrs. Fane decisively, in Hindustanee. Then in English to her husband and the others: “Do not agree to this on any account. Let us go on at once.”

“We must now proceed on our journey,” says Hay. “Which is the man who is to guide us?”

“Nund Coomar brought you here and is responsible for your safety. You cannot go before he returns.”

“But we must—we have now no more time to lose,” says Hay.

“The best thing you can all do now,” says the Brahmin quietly, “is to go to sleep. If Nund Coomar returns with the bhylee in another hour or two you can then go on. In any case I will at once send a man in to Abdoolapore to give notice of your being here, and an escort party will come to you here or meet you on the way. But proceed just now you cannot.”

“Cannot!” says Hay. “You would not prevent us, would you?”

"I have placed a guard of four men, two armed with clubs and two with swords, at the gate, to guard and protect you; they also have orders not to allow you to leave this place until Nund Coomar returns."

"What! are we prisoners? Would you make prisoners of us—officers—*Sahib log*? Do you know that these"—pointing to Coote and Fane—"are gentlemen of high position?" says Hay.

"You cannot say we have made you prisoners, when we are only taking care of you. The best thing for you all to do now is to go to sleep. I must retire to rest myself. Salaam!" And he and the other Brahmins are gone.

What does all this mean? To those who think it forebodes the worst it is terrible. To be within so few miles of their destination and to be withheld from reaching it! This was to have one's bark founder and allow the inimical waves to overwhelm one at one's very door. Had they gone on from the grove they would have been in Abdoolapore ere this. (They make quite sure of that—they ignore all possibility of failures and mischances that way, as one is apt to do in such thinking.) Why had they allowed that prattling young scoundrel, with his mouth full of fine sentiments and his heart full of deceit, to beguile them from it?

"I distrusted the fellow from the beginning," says Coote to Hamilton.

"You think their intentions towards us are not friendly?"

"I believe that young *soour* [pig] brought us in here purposely to secure us, and that he has now gone into Khizrabad to give notice of our being here."

But the men keep their fears to themselves. They pretend to believe that the young Brahmin will be back soon, that the messenger will be dispatched to Abdoolapore. And they are exhausted and sleepy. And the most of them, the two sisters and Coote and Hamilton, are soon asleep. But sleep cannot come to the father and mother,

to the young man whose bride to be is placed in a position of such danger.

These hold anxious conference together. "If they wish to deliver us up for the sake of the reward, we must offer them a larger reward to take us into Abdoolapore," says Fane. "We will give them anything they ask," says Hay. And so they confer and discuss and lament—and lament and discuss and confer. And the moon, now riding high in the heavens, floods the enclosure with her silver light. That glorious splendour seems a mockery of their woe. And then Hay, thinking that the husband and wife would like to be by themselves, leaves them and begins pacing up and down the enclosure. He continues pacing up and down it, while the moon is speeding across the sky and the moments go rushing by. He has never passed such a vigil as this. His brain is racked, his heart is torn with sorrows and fears. His heart rises in wild rebellion.

Surely there are some things for which it is impossible to say unto the Lord, 'Thy will be done.' And then his heart rises in earnest prayer—'Deliver us, O Lord! O Lord! deliver them.' And then he hears the gate being stealthily opened, and he pauses in his sad pacing, and he sees the man on watch coming up the enclosure, the naked sword he bears in his hand gleaming in the bright moonshine. What does this mean?—murder? Hay steps forward to confront the man. The Brahmin advances close up to him. Now is Hay's courage put to the utmost test. At no moment during the past three days has the strain on his nerves been so severe as at this. The man advances up to him until their faces almost touch. "Awaken the others," he whispers, "and depart out of this as soon as you can."

"Out of this—out of the village?"

"Yes. What is intended against you is not a good thing and I will have no part in it. I will not have the guilt of your blood upon my soul, upon this village. Quick, awaken the others."

They are all awakened. They have reached the gate.

They pass with their lightest footsteps by the other men of the guard lying fast asleep on their quilts and carpets on the ground by the side of the gateway. They are moving away from the village. The girls might have thought that this was a dream-deliverance in their sleep, did not their painful feet so fully assure them that they were awake.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE BYRAGEE.

IF, as they are hurrying away from the Brahmin village, their deliverance would have seemed to Beatrice and Lilian Fane as a dream if it had not been for their paining feet, to their mother, to Hay, it seems like the awaking from some horrid nightmare. In proportion to the agony of a few minutes ago is now their relief. They stay not to find or follow the pathway. They make straight across the open fields until they have got well away from the village. Then they stop. They guess which way Abdoolapore may lie, and bend their steps in that direction. But they have to make constant deviations from it on account of the villages or hamlets. They find no road or pathway that they can follow for any length of time. It seems to them as if most of these pathways ran at right-angles to the course they wished to follow: that is due to their condition of mind. They pass across fields in which the sharp-edged or knotty roots of the cut maize or cut sugar-cane wound and bruise their ankles and feet; or they stumble across others in which the hard ridges or huge clods are almost as terrible for the quite or almost bare, the cut and blistered feet of poor Mrs. Fane and her daughters. For some time they are able to follow the bank of an artificial channel, the water running in which is very pleasant to the eye, and its soft, smooth, grass-covered pathway most delightful to the feet. But now it sweeps away in the wrong direction, and they have once more to move across

the hard dry fields. They pass over the high-lying fields, from which the wheat harvest has recently been cut, across the low-lying ones, now white and dry, over which the water will be standing and the green mantle of the young rice spread in another month or two. They traverse pieces of waste land covered with wild caper and other thorny bushes. Then they find their progress arrested by a narrow but deep drainage line, which they find in furious flow—this water must come from the great canal, of which the small channel which had afforded them such agreeable walking was a distributary. They must find a crossing. Which way are they to go, up or down? Down is more in their direction. They must keep the moon behind them. They keep along the edge, but still they find no place to cross: and now the moon is to their right, and now in front of them. This will not do, so they retrace their steps. They follow the stream upward, and now to their joy it turns in the right direction, and there is the Pole star a little to the left, and the moon well behind them. They pass through a long stretch of babool or kikar trees—this is the *Acacia Arabica*—from the huge spike-like thorns of which many of them suffer greatly, and on emerging from it they find the moon straight in front of them and the Pole star behind them. This is maddening! The precious hours of the night are passing away; the early coming dawn with its sharp, clear light will soon be here. Are they never to get across this stream? “We can only go one way,” says Major Coote, even he angered, “and we may as well keep going upward.” And then the Pole star is in front and the moon behind again. In short, the stream has here a very tortuous course, runs in long loops. They have worked round a long stretch of the acacia jungle through which they could not have forced their way, and arrived again at the bank of the stream, when they miss the sound of the rushing water, and, looking down, find the channel quite dry. They have got above the point of junction of the escape channel of the canal. They scramble down one bank and up the other

not without difficulty, both the banks being very steep; but those tortuous windings of the stream have cost them much time, and they are anxious to hurry on, and could not delay to look for an easier crossing. They move over the stretch of waste which, as usual, marks the course of the drainage line. Again they find a deep, narrow channel across their path; it must be the same one come round with a wide sweep.

But now there is no perpendicular bank, or rushing water, or alas! dim light, to make it difficult for them to cross. Beyond is still the flat level barren plain, through which the stream meanders, and then they arrive at the edge of a heavy dhâk jungle standing upon it. It is a specially dense one, and as they pass in among the thick-standing, large-leaved trees there is a delightful sweet coolness in the air, and they have actually green grass—a mere wash, but still green grass—beneath their feet; and it is covered with little white flowers like their own loved English daisy. But alas for the light that enables them to see them! The undesired and unwelcome morning is now breaking. The time for general movement has come, and they are once more conspicuous on the face of the land, in an alien country, and amid a now inimical people. What shall they do? Shall they press on at every risk, or shall they face the terrible ordeal of another day in the open, and remain where they are? This jungle seems to possess the merit of solitariness in a supreme degree. They must be very remote from the habitations of men, for they hear not a sound connected with them—not the bleating of flocks, nor the lowing of herds, nor the barking of dogs. They sit down to rest and discuss the matter. While doing so, the deep silence around them is broken by a sudden rustle. Then, that is surely the sound of a human voice!

“What was that?”

“I thought it was some one calling ‘*Aao! Aao!*’ ”
 (“Come! Come!”)

They listen. Yes; those are the words, softly but clearly spoken. In England our ears are not attuned to

angel voices now. But a native of the land who had passed that way, and not found out from whence the words came, would have told when he got home how in the dhâk jungle he had heard the voice of a spirit, the soft voice of a female spirit. (We must give sex to our supernatural beings, even to a "first cause.") "*Aao! Aao!*"—soft words, but they fall harshly on their ears. For whom is the invitation meant? For them or some one else? "Come! Come!" And now they hear a whining and rustling in the bushes around them, a rustling and whining which seems to be now here, now there; now in this direction and now in that; and now around them. What can all this mean? Are there spirits about? Many of them are just in a condition of nerve to see them. But instead of something supernatural they see a surprising natural sight. Before them lies a long narrow open glade. From under a bush at one side of this appears a jackal, and from under another bush another jackal; and then a pair of jackals run on to it from this side, and a pair of jackals run on to it from the other; and the jackals all move down the alley to its farther end, some at a gentle satisfied trot, others at an easy joyous gallop. And then, like men suddenly emerging from an ambush, jackals run on to the glade from every point of the surrounding belt of trees and bushes; and they all hurry down to the farther end, with various forms of movement, but all more or less quick, and various kinds of cries, not the howls and yells with which they usually make night hideous, but far softer whines and gentler barkings. And there they all pull up in a mass. And now there is a sudden commotion in the pack, a sudden accession of whining, a sudden jumping about and leaping over one another, a sudden cocking of ears and whisking of tails. And still greater is the commotion when a man appears and begins to throw something among them from a wallet which he carries slung over his shoulder. This continues for a little while, and then the man unslings the wallet and empties it over them, and then gives it a wave. This is evidently a recognized signal, for

the animals immediately separate and run back and disappear under the bushes, and the glade is left empty as before. As the man moves up the alley, the astonished onlookers observe that he every now and then puts his fingers into a little bag he carries, and deposits a little mound of something white upon the ground.

"He is putting down flour for the ants," says Major Coote. This is a well-known form of beneficence in the East.

The man has now come quite near to them. He has not seen them, because his eyes were bent on the ground. But now he catches sight of them. He exhibits no sign of astonishment, but walks quietly up to them. He salutes them with a peculiarly soft and graceful movement of his hand and arm, and cries "*Râm ! Râm !*" to them in a peculiarly soft and gentle tone of voice. The voice, the accent, and the gesture are those of a man of birth and breeding, though the stranger's dress is that of a faquir. The fairness and fineness of the skin, and the well-cut features, are also indicative of good birth, of a superior social class. He is a man of the middle height, and his figure is slender and graceful. He appears to be in the prime of life, though his dark hair and beard are beginning to be streaked with gray. He surveys them with a kind regard, with a mild and benign look.

"Peace be with you, children of God," he says in his soft voice. "You have escaped, I suppose, from Khizrabad, where there has been such terrible shedding of blood. Oh that man should shed the blood of his brother man !"

"We have," says Major Coote curtly.

"You are in danger of your lives if you are seen of any of the people about here," goes on the faquir. "They have slain many of your countrymen. You must come with me to my hut. That is the only place where you will be safe, where your precious lives will not be in danger of being lost."

"We met a man yesterday who spoke to us in the manner you do now, and then betrayed us. He too

was a holy man, a Brahmin like yourself," says Hay bitterly.

"I am not a Brahmin now; and which of us is holy? I will not betray you. Now that I have come upon you it has become a sacred obligation with me to prevent you from losing your lives. You will know for certain that I could not betray you to death when I tell you that I am a Kabirpanthi, a Ramanandi."

Each of us expands his own dunghill into the universe. Our own thoughts and feelings and opinions form the infinite and the eternal. There is a ring round the thinker in London as there is round the thinker in Mecca and Benares; but that ring is not so big, does not gird in the whole universe, the present and the future, all eternity, as each of them imagines. To this man standing here, the truth, the whole truth, the only truth, the eternal truth, lay in the teachings of one Ramanand, of whom these English people had never before even heard, as is most likely the case with the reader also.

"You know not what a Kabirpanthi is! Strange. But you English people live entirely apart from us. We Ramanandis are the followers of the great *guru*" (teacher), "Ramanand, with whom the sacredness of life was the leading tenet of his moral code. All life comes from God, and is a portion of his divine substance, is an effluence of that bright influence uncreate. All life is therefore most precious, that of the insect as much as that of the elephant, and to be cherished and not destroyed. You English people hold the contrary. You slay too much. Therefore I like you not. But still I am bound to preserve your lives. We are careful to avoid all destruction of life even accidentally. We are careful how we walk, lest we tread on some insect; many of us go about with our mouths covered lest their breath should poison some form of life in the air."

"I have seen that," says Coote.

"I will tell you about myself, so that you may see that you can trust me. I am a man of substance, a zemindar"

(landed proprietor). "I have houses and lands, a wife and children, servants. But these are the things that clog the soul and prevent one from attaining to the perfect holy life. I determined to rid me of them and retire to some lonely place and dwell there by myself. I first resolved to depart into some forest wild, of which I should be the sole occupant, and there meditate, and feed the beasts and birds around me. The sheep, the oxen, the goats, the dogs and cats, and the domestic birds, are all taken care of in the habitations of men. But who is there to feed the birds and beasts in the wilderness? I should do this. But then I reflected that the highest form of life is the human. In the lonely forest I should not be able to minister to it. I must seek some solitary spot through which men passed, even if they did not abide there. I have found what I wanted here. Here is this lonely jungle in which the wild beasts and wild birds dwell, and around it stretches the great lonely uninhabited plain. Across that plain and by this forest runs a track leading from Rajpootana to Hurdwar. At the time of the Hurdwar fair this road is thronged with pilgrims. Thus, then, here I could be solitary for most part of the year, and yet be able to minister to thousands of people at one period of it. So here I have set up my resting-place. The pilgrims—the pious men and women—had to toil across this great plain, on which there is no village, no wells, during the hot months of the year; and think what their sufferings must have been from the want of water!"

"We can tell—we have recently experienced them," says Coote.

"Poor people," says the Byragee tenderly. "And so here, in the middle of the plain, I have sunk a well by the side of the road, and built a little hut near it. I feed the birds and beasts in the jungle, and give water to the pilgrims from the well. You had better come with me, and I will give you shelter in my hut. You will be safe there."

"The man who betrayed us yesterday also said that all

men should love one another, and not injure one another—that was to be the leading precept in his new religion."

"His new religion—a young man?"

"Yes."

"With English shoes? Puh!"

"Yes."

"I know him—a foolish young fellow. His head full of wind. But I did not think he would be guilty of treachery. If his feet have gone astray, it is because he has no settled path to walk on. But you need not fear any treachery from me."

His sweet open countenance seems to give full assurance of that. They do not see that they can do better than follow him.

They accompany him down the glade, and then he turns into another one and stops in the middle of it and gives a peculiar whistle, and the birds come fluttering round him, and he throws them grain. They have arrived at the edge of the jungle, and the barren plain runs away before them as far as the eye can reach. The track across it touches the forest here, and so it is here that the faquir has sunk his well and planted his lonely dwelling-place. The latter is a small hut with mud walls, and a flat-terraced roof—truly a hermit's cell. There is but one doorway leading into it: to this there is no door.

"Why, you said we should be quite safe here," exclaims Hay. "You do not call this house secure?"

"You are more safe within it than you would be in any fort or fortress. No one can enter it without first setting foot on the worshipping place without, and no one dare do that. The room is therefore a sanctuary."

The hut was raised some three feet from the ground, and in front of it extended a square platform of beaten clay of the same height. Round the edges of this platform were twelve dwarf pillars, one at each of the four corners, the others between. The special incarnation of the Divine Being chosen by Ramanand for the worship of himself and his followers was Vishnu; therefore they worshipped also

Vishnu's wife Sita, and his half-brother Lukshman, and his faithful friend Hunoomān, the monkey-god. Then again Tulasee was the favourite mistress of Vishnu. Her jealous spouse changed her into a plant. Vishnu, in order to enjoy her company, transformed himself into the Sālarāma, an ammonite found in some of the Himalayan streams, and now greatly valued as an object of worship. Our concern with all this mythology is this: On the dwarf pillars round the raised platform were placed representations, in baked clay, of the monkey-god; of the various forms taken on himself by Vishnu; images of Lukshman and of Sita; earthen pots containing the sacred tulsi plant; while in the centre of it, in the position of honour, had been placed an ammonite of very unusual size; and so on the platform and the hut beside it was conferred a sacred and inviolable character. It was to this that the eremite trusted for their safety.

"No one knows that you are here—no one is likely to come here to molest you. If they did, you would be as safe within that hut as behind the walls of any of your forts, even the mighty ones of Allahabad or of Agra."

The fugitives would all, most decidedly, have preferred to be within the forts, under the shadow of their walls. The ammonite, and the tulsi plant, and the monkey-god, were all very well, but they would much rather have trusted for their safety to the protecting powers of a few English bayonets. But here they are.

The seeker after spiritual perfection then busies himself in providing for the bodily wants of his guests. He draws water from the well for them to drink and wash with, he brings out the parched grain which is what he himself now chiefly lives on. He waits on them most assiduously, on the women with tender solicitude. He washes Lilian's poor lacerated feet, and binds them up for her. He gives Hay's wounded arm the cleaning and dressing which it needs so much. All this is evidently a labour of love to him: nothing can exceed his kindness. But with the

fugitives the chief thought, of course, is how they are to get into Abdoolapore. They consult the Byragee.

"I have some disciples in the neighbouring villages," says the holy man, "and two of them are coming to me to-day for religious instruction. They will be here very soon. These can guide you into Abdoolapore to-night, or one of them could take a letter in from you stating that you are here and asking for an escort to be sent out for you. I should advise the latter. The great danger to you is immediately round Abdoolapore, which is now as a beleaguered city. The man would reach Abdoolapore early in the afternoon, and the escort ought to be out here by the evening." Yes—that is what they will do. The Byragee brings out some paper and the reed pen, which he now employs, not on secular business, but only in the inditing of holy things. They write a few lines—they have to write on a very small piece of paper, such as can easily be concealed about the person—stating that four officers and three ladies are in concealment here and asking for help. For the sake of greater safety they write them in French. The disciples now arrive, two decent-looking young country lads.

"You can trust them?" asks the anxious Hay.

"To the death," says the Byragee. "Do you not know that to the disciple his master or instructor comes next after God; before his father even: for his father begot his body only, while the teacher is the father of his soul?"

As the young man chosen to carry the missive has to pass through his own village on the way, he is told to change the clean white garments in which he has come to visit his spiritual instructor and put on his ordinary work-a-day garb—he is a carpenter by trade.

We have now to accompany the bearer of the little piece of paper on which the lives of so many people hung.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE LETTER REFUSED—IMPRISONED AGAIN.

THE young man on whose movements so much depends knows the whole country-side up to Abdoolapore very well, and so is able to make his way along the least frequented village pathways. He passes over the eight miles unmolested. Arrived, he leaves the "native" city on one side and passes into the English station; he moves along the deserted roads and by the burnt-down bungalows of the cantonment. He inquires at a little bazaar for the residence of the Brigadier, to whom he has been charged to deliver the missive, and is told that he and the other English residents have left the cantonment and taken up their quarters in a fortified enclosure known as the "Dumduma." This very road leads up to it. The young man is very well acquainted with the native, but not with the European portion of Abdoolapore; and so he gets quite close up to the fortified position, which is all that the Europeans at present occupy or hold, without knowing it. He is passing by a small house by the side of the road, in which there is an outlying picket of English soldiers, when he is challenged by the sentry, and not knowing the meaning or import of the words, he continues to press on; is challenged again, and then again, as he continues to hurry on, full of the importance of his mission, the saving of so many human lives—is he not too a Ramanandi? And then he gives a jump as he hears the report of a musket, and a bullet whistles by him within an inch of his nose.

And then comes the sound of rapid footsteps, and he finds himself in the grasp of a couple of English soldiers, who hurry him rapidly off the road and into the temporary guard-house.

"Shure, he is a sapoy—ye can tell it by the cut of the whisker!" says an Irish soldier.

That special cut of whisker was to cost many an innocent native his life during the coming two years.

"He is a bloody mutineer," says an English soldier.

The Hindustanee language is a *lingua franca* that had its rise in the camps and bazaars of the great riverside mart and *entrepôt* and metropolis of Delhi, where the different-tongued natives of Hindustan and western Asia met. Now has come a large admixture of English. The young messenger spoke his own village dialect, and the soldiers spoke the barrack-room Hindustanee, in which English, and not Sanscrit, or Hindee, or Persian, forms the leading element. Consequently they did not understand one another. But still the captors could comprehend the reiterated "Brigadier Sahib, Brigadier Sahib," of the captive.

"Shure he wants to see the Brigadier. He may have something to say to him. Let us take him to him. It's but a step."

The Brigadier has his temporary quarters just within the adjoining gateway of the enclosure. The captive spy, as the soldiers deem him, is conveyed thither. When the Brigadier's servants announce to him, with a good deal of excitement, that the soldiers at the neighbouring picket have seized a spy, it becomes an accepted fact that the man is a spy.

"But why have they brought him here?" says the Brigadier irritably.

It is now **within** a few minutes of two o'clock, at which hour the Brigadier has his tiffin. All his meals are of the utmost importance to him; he lives only for them and his rubbers of whist; but he is specially fond of his tiffin, for that is the meal at which he has his first bottle of beer,

and, his office work being over before then, after it comes the much-loved afternoon sleep.

"Why do they not take him on to Major Cox?"

"The prisoner, the spy, says he is most anxious to speak to the Presence."

"He is not armed, he has no arms about him?" says the Brigadier anxiously.

"Oh, no."

"Then tell them to bring him in—to bring him in."

The sergeant and the soldiers make their military salute. The sentry makes his report.

The man was trying to steal by the outpost, was trying to get stealthily—most stealthily—by it, and refused to halt when challenged, so he (Murphy) fired at him, and the other men—Private Higgins, and Private Bell, and Private Doherty—ran out and caught him. Then he kept saying, "Brigadier—Brigadier," and so they brought him here.

"Why do you want to see me?" demands the Brigadier sharply.

The young neophyte is of a nervous temperament. He does not like his present position. He has always held these white men as a very terrible people. And he has heard that the wrath of the Englishmen in Abdoolapore burns just now strongly against his fellow-countrymen, several of whom have been disposed of very summarily by hanging or shooting, within the last few days. And so it is in a trembling, stuttering voice, obviously indicative of his guilt, that he utters the sentence,—

"I am a disciple of the Guru Toolsi Dass, the Ramnandi——"

"Gurus, and Tulsis, and Ramnands!" interrupts the Brigadier angrily. "What is he talking about? Probably pretending to be mad. A favourite dodge with the natives. I know them well. He was trying to steal by the picket, you say?"

"Trying to steal quietly by it." Proud of his exploit, the young soldier has come to believe this sincerely. Alas

for poor facts! And what a thing is human testimony! "He thought, sir, that I would be in the shadow of the house, on the other side."

"And if he had got into the enclosure we could not have known that he was not one of our own coolies. He could have done what he liked there, the scoundrel. Take him away—take him to Major Cox!" cries the fat old Brigadier in his thick husky voice.

"He is saying something about a *chit*" (note, letter), "sir," says his good-natured young aide-de-camp, who is also in the room.

"Let my hands be unloosed, in the name of God!" cries the young messenger earnestly.

"Very good, unloose his hands," says the Brigadier. "But keep an eye on him. He may mean mischief. He looks a scoundrel, a most thorough scoundrel." The lad had a face like that of Melanchthon.

His hands free, the captive gropes about amid his clothing, and produces a little bit of paper—he is in a violent perspiration, due not only to the heat of the day but to the perilous position in which he finds himself: the paper is consequently damp and discoloured—and he hands the minute missive to one of the soldiers.

"Why, it is a dirty piece of common bazaar paper," says the Brigadier. "Phew! do not bring it near me. You can read, corporal?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is my name on it?"

"No, sir."

"Look inside—is my name there?"

"No, sir."

"I thought it could not be for me—a piece of common bazaar paper."

"It is not English, sir."

"I thought the fellow was lying. Throw it into the wastepaper basket."

The little bit of paper, laden with so many human lives, goes down into the midst of the pieces of torn paper meant

to be cast away. And the khansaman announces tiffin, and the old Brigadier says peremptorily,—

“Take him away. Take him away to Major Cox. He shall be tried by court-martial to-morrow.”

“Wretches hang that jurymen may dine.”

So far as the young messenger knew, the basket might be the proper receptacle for letters; and so far as he was aware, the document had been read and his errand fulfilled. In any case he makes no further remark as the soldiers hurry him away.

And those whose thoughts have followed him with so much of hope and fear have to beguile the hours succeeding his departure as best they may. They pair off. Major and Mrs. Fane retire a little way into the wood and seat themselves at the foot of a tree, in order to discuss the events of the last few days quietly together, as they have not been able to do before. And then their thoughts fly away from the present back into the past, that past which seems to come up so vividly before them in this time of trouble.

“I do not believe we have been in a wood together since that last day we drove to Lyndhurst,” says Mrs. Fane. That was shortly after they were married. And then they talk very tenderly together. A cold, calm, self-possessed “hee! haw!” drawling sort of man; a proud, cold, haughty woman—that is the outside estimate of the two. But now they are gentle and tender and sentimental, as tender and sentimental as any pair of young lovers—as William Hay and their daughter seated together under another tree. For, as has been said before, it is in moments such as these that the strength of the relationship, which is apt to become weakened amid the commonplace of ordinary times, is felt in its full force. Then a common atmosphere once more envelops the husband and wife, each of whom has brought into the life of the other the most important circumstance in it; then the strength of the tie which binds them to one another and separates them from the rest of the world is felt in all its fullness.

And Beatrice asks William Hay with tender solicitude about his wound, and he makes light of it, though at that very moment it is paining him greatly, and he has a private fear that he may have to lose his arm. And when Beatrice, worn out by the dangers and hardships, the fatigue and physical sufferings of the last three terrible days, cannot help breaking down for a moment—the tension of exertion gone—he sustains and cheers and comforts her, going for comfort to the source from which he has ever been accustomed to draw it. Are not God's everlasting arms under her, and is He not strong to save? And then he repeats some of the verses from the Psalms, which his constant perusal, and the effect of them upon his soul and spirit, and likewise upon his sensitive ear, have made so familiar to him.

"The Lord is my rock, and my fortress and my deliverer."

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear."

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me."

And Lilian Fane and young Hamilton have seated themselves together; they are mere acquaintances, but they are drawn together now by their common youth and their common misfortunes.

"It all seems like a terrible dream," says Lilian. "How terrible to have met people only a day or two before—and to be looking forward to meeting them again—and then to see them lying dead before you!"

"Whom did you see lying dead before you?" asks Hamilton—rather a matter-of-fact young man.

"Oh, poor Captain Tucker, and—and Mr. Hill, and—and—and Mr. Walton." i]

At last she has arrived at the name which has been foremost. And now the hot tears come rolling down her blistered, burning cheek, and she wipes her eyes with her rent and grimy sleeve: their garments are very much torn as well as very dirty.

And Major Coote passes an hour in hearing the Guru discourse. The Ramanandi could have had a full talk about his creed only with a Kant or a Spinoza. His present auditor is no metaphysician; but he is a willing listener, and though he has to ask for explanation of some philosophical terms, he has a good colloquial knowledge of the language. And so the Guru launches out into a long discourse on the history and peculiar tenets of his sect.

He describes how the sect was founded by Ramanand and extended by Kabir, who attacked the idolatrous worship of the Brahminical system, and whose teaching greatly influenced Nanuk, the founder of the Sikh religion; how he taught the doctrine of the identity of God and man, God in us and we in Him: that old doctrine of the indwelling God, only so recognizable, "in whom we live and move and have our being"—as St. Paul, quoting from an early pantheistic writer, put it—from whom all things are, who produced and maintains and pervades all that is: the old Sufy doctrine of the Mohammedans, a doctrine asserted by Grotius and Archbishop Tillotson, and set forth by Pope in his "Essay on Man"—

"All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
Whose body Nature is and God the soul;"

how in the world and throughout the universe "all the existing corpuscles of life derive the effluence of existence from the source of real unity;" how this applies to animals, to all living creatures, as well as to man; how all life is therefore sacred, to destroy it therefore most culpable, to cherish it therefore most meritorious.

It may perhaps interest some reader to know that Archbishop Tillotson has set forth this portion of the old doctrine—that the life of animals is divine, that they too have immortal souls—likewise in his writings. These are his words: "Immortality imports that the soul remains after the body, and is not corrupted or dissolved with it. And there is no inconvenience in attributing this sort of

immortality to the brute creation . . . whether they return into the soul and spirit of the world, if there be any such thing, as some fancy, or whether they pass into the bodies of other animals which succeed in their rooms, is not necessary to be particularly determined. It is sufficient that they are a sort of spirits. And as this was always the common philosophy of the world, so we find it to be a supposition of Scripture, which attributes souls to brutes as well as to man, though of a much inferior nature."

And now the terrible heat and glare, and the fiery furious dust-laden gale, are upon them. Now the mother and daughters seek shelter within the hut, which has been devoted to their exclusive use: and soon they come out again to seek relief from its stifling atmosphere. But the heat and the glare without are terrible. The vast open plain before them seems like a sea of fire. Little whirlwinds fly about on it; huge dusky dust-cones move slowly across it. The natives hold that each of these contains a devil; that the smaller whirlwinds are due to the twirling about of the mad little demons, or imps; the dust columns to the graver movements of the devils of a superior age and size and station. Certainly here is the burning marl, here the fiery cope of heaven, of Milton's Pandemonium; and here may be Satan and Belial, and Beelzebub, and the lesser evil spirits. Then the women retire again into the comparative darkness of the hut, which also prevents the hot wind from blowing directly upon them. Then they rush out again, unable to endure its choking heat. Fierce the heat, terrible the glare, dreadful the fiery dust-laden wind. But the fierce heat is also their friend; the terrible glare is also their ally; the fiery dust-laden wind is also their protector. They prevent people from being abroad at this hour. Not a soul comes near the hut. It is, however, like purchasing salvation at the stake. The warmth is considerable. But the centuries go by, and so do the hours. The sun is now dropping down towards the west. The hot wind has begun to lull. The glare which had been torturing becomes only painful;

then only disagreeable. But the mental sufferings of the poor women increase as their bodily sufferings diminish. Their fears rise as the sun goes down. The time for movement and traffic has come again. Now may travellers be expected to appear upon the lonely track. But still it is delightful that the fierce turmoil of the sunshine has ended, that the blustering of the wind has ceased. How soothing is the sense of quiet! The flagellation is over. If they do not as yet enjoy the direct physical pleasures of these May nights; if the darkness, soft and black as the eyes of the daughters of the land, is not yet upon them, to lull and soothe the tortured senses; if the coolness has not yet passed into the air to refresh and revive them—still they enjoy all the pleasure of relief. If this evening glow is vivid, it is very different from the fierce incandescence of the midday hours, and this warmish evening air is very different from the fiery hot wind. The widespread solitary plain conveys a sense of peace and quiet. So they sit by the side of the well and enjoy the cool of the evening. The cool of the evening!—you must have passed through the heat of an Eastern day to know what that means. Then you will understand how it was thought to be pleasant to the Almighty himself. And they watch, feel the decrease in the warmth and brightness, the increase in the coolness and darkness, with a mental as well as a physical joy, with a delight of the soul as well as of the body. For the former meant danger as well as suffering, the latter means safety as well as pleasure. The day is their enemy, their betrayer; the night their protector, their friend.

What is that cloud of dust upon the track? Is it a herd of cattle? Is it the delivering escort, the escort sent to bring them in? How the hearts of the women beat! It is a troop of horsemen, there is soon no doubt of that. And it comes from the right direction, from the eastward. It comes nearer and nearer. And now the horsemen have left the dusty track and are riding along the harder surface of the plain, and stand out clear above it. What is

this? Surely that is the bizarre uniform, so familiar in their eyes, of the Nuwâb of Khizrabad's cavalry. The officers have often laughed at it: they do not feel inclined to laugh at it now.

"Not your men! The Nuwâb's men!" cries the Guru. "Into the hut at once, before they see you."

But they have seen them, as is too surely testified by their shouting and yelling; and now they come dashing onward. There is a great commotion among the fugitives. The men hurry the women towards the hut, and hurry them in, and, humiliating as they may feel it, hurry in very fast themselves. They all scuttle in, like rabbits into a burrow. But there is nothing else to be done. And the galloping horsemen have soon reached the edge of the platform. "Feringhee! Feringhee!" they shout. One man leaps off his horse, and, throwing his reins to another and waving his naked sword above his head, is about to leap on the platform, preparatory to rushing into the hut, when the Guru, who has also mounted on to the platform, confronts him.

"What! would you dare set foot in my place of worship?" he cries. "Do you not see the images?" and he points to the pottery figures of the curly-tailed monkey-god.

Great is the power of superstition; nay, great is the power of sentiment—the sentiment of religion, of honour, or of good taste. The young man stands still.

"And the hut is part of the platform, and is therefore also sacred and holy, a sanctuary. No man dare set foot within it."

"But you would not protect these Feringhees, these foreigners, these oppressors, these slayers of kine?" says the leader of the troop of horsemen.

"They are slayers of kine. But they too have within them the spark divine. I must protect them, as I would protect any other living thing—wolf, or cat, or dog. Besides, they are now in sanctuary, and even a murderer, one who has slain his brother man, is safe in sanctuary."

"But we have the Nuwâb's orders to seize these people."

"*These* people?—why *these* people?"

"Oh, we know these are the people—three women and four men, who were confined in the guest-house at Chundpore, and got out of it no one knows how—by the power of magic, some say. A young Brahmin came to the Nuwâb's palace and gave information about them——"

"The strayer from the path of righteousness," exclaims the recluse.

"And we were sent to bring them in. The Brahmin had boasted that they were like birds in a net, and lo! when we reach the village we find the birds flown. We rest and eat our bread, and then we ride about the country in search of them, and at last a shepherd-boy, who had been in this jungle, tells us he had seen a number of English people, six or seven, in it, near your *takia*" (resting-place; literally, pillow), "and so we determine to come here, and here we find them."

"And they are now in sanctuary."

"But, Sir Guru, you are not aware, perhaps, that the reign of the Company is over and that of the Nuwâb re-established. By sheltering these people you will not now obtain the favour of the former, but only incur the displeasure of the latter."

"What care I, who have left the world, for Company or Nuwâb? What care I for kings or princes? Ramanand is my only prince, Kabir my only king. Their commands alone do I obey, and their command upon me is to help in the sustaining of life, and not in the destroying of it."

"Then you refuse to obey the orders of the Nuwâb?"

"Yes—and you may go back and tell him so."

"That will not do, good father!" says the horseman, with a laugh. "And return to find the birds flown again! No, no! If it is your business to protect these people, it is mine to try and capture them. Each man to his work. If you have to obey the commands of Kabir, I have to obey those of the Nuwâb."

It may be imagined with what feelings those within the hut listen to this disputation—how they feel the presence of these men, whose hands are almost upon them. The horsemen have placed themselves all round the platform, and the heads of some of the horses are so near the door of the hut that those sitting within can feel their hot breath.

“As you refuse to let us enter the hut, all I have to do now is to send word to the palace and take care that these people do not get away. We must bivouac here for the night,” says the leader of the troopers. He then gives the orders to dismount; dispatches a couple of men to Khizrabad, and then places a couple of men on sentry at each side of the hut—they are within some six feet of the doorway leading into it. The other men then off-saddle and tether their horses and prepare for the night. They make a huge bonfire, not of course for the sake of the warmth, or for the purpose of cooking—a handful of the parched grain they have brought with them and some water from the well will supply their simple wants—but partly to illumine the spot during the present darkness, and chiefly to give them lights for their hooqas, those hooqas which play so important a part in their lives, the giving or withholding of which is the mark of brotherhood or of social ostracism. The refusal of the hooqah and of water to drink, to a man, is a sign that he is outcast. A man will face death rather than the terrors of that *hooqa pani bund*—“pipe and water forbidden”—as the sepoy was showing by refusing to use the new cartridge, which would have brought that terrible penalty upon them.

And now the moon is rising, and now mounting upward, and now at the zenith, and now beginning to decline. And her usually delightful presence is to-night marked with as much physical suffering to the fugitives as the flaming presence of the tyrant sun had been. Cool as it is without, it is terribly hot within the hut, more especially during the earlier hours of the night; and that heat is of course added to greatly by there being so many of them

within its narrow limits, and the suffering from it enhanced by the tainting of the air to which that overcrowding leads. What their sufferings were like will be understood by those who have read the simple narrative, by one of the survivors, of that terrible night in the Black Hole of Calcutta—a true tale, more awful than any feigned story of horror that any poet ever imagined or penned. It is only the open doorway that keeps them alive. It is only at its open space that they can breathe a life-sustaining and not a life-destroying air. They take it by turns to be near it. They have only the snatches of sleep that utter exhaustion forces upon them. They have to sit on the earthen floor in constrained and irksome postures. No wonder that young Hamilton can hardly resist the temptation to dash out of the place and shift in the open for himself. And they cannot but entertain the dread that the sacred character of the hut and platform may suddenly fail to protect them. Some man, bolder or more bloodthirsty than the rest, may suddenly disregard that sacredness. The floors of sanctuaries, of mosques and temples, as well as of churches and cathedrals, have often been stained with blood. But the moon mounts up the eastern curve of the heavenly vault and descends the western one, and the horror-laden hours go by. And then from their doorway, which looks east, they can see the sky begin to brighten; and then they watch the blazing morning star lose its splendour and fade away in the light of the daffodil sky—as I have seen it often from the door of my tent. And as the light quickens, the range of their vision across the widespread barren plain increases. And now what is that upon it? A mass of some kind. And does the range of their vision still continue to increase, or is it that the mass is coming nearer? It must be the latter. It is drawing nearer fast. A herd of cattle? It moves too fast for that. What can it be? Horsemen? Yes! More of the Nuwâb's cavalry? They might come that way, but they would be more likely to come the other.

It has now become necessary for us to follow the movements of Colonel Grey, and so of the Campbells who escaped from Khizrabad with him. We have arrived at the last day of our tale; we must now go back to its fourth day, the day of the outbreak at Khizrabad.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE LETTER READ.

IN common with the other English families of the cantonment, the Campbells passed the greater part of that fatal day out in the open air, on the Ridge, by the side of the flagstaff tower. Mrs. Campbell and the little girl pass them, seated in their little carriage; but Dr. Campbell passes them directly in the midst of the flaming rays of the sun, which have such power to kill, and which were specially inimical to a man of Dr. Campbell's build. There is no little demand on his professional services, and he cannot help moving from carriage to carriage, helping and cheering the poor wives whose husbands are away with their regiments, and, alas! too soon, consoling those whose husbands have been killed. And the sufferings caused by the heat are enhanced by the continually increasing anxiety, by the shock of adverse circumstances. First comes the defection of the 66th and the slaying of the officers, whose wives, too soon widows, are sitting here upon the Ridge. Then comes the explosion of the magazine, which was both seen and heard: for many who had their eyes fixed on the city spread out before them saw the great mass of flame leap up into the air; and the roar was heard of all, and the dense black column of smoke was seen of all. Then comes the return of Colonel Grey, with the news of the closing of the Jumoo Gate behind him, which means the defection of the sepoys and the loss of the guns within it. The superiority of numbers is

now entirely on the side of the mutineers, and so Brigadier Moss decides that there is nothing to be done but to get the women and children out of the place as quickly as may be. He determines to retire on Nurnal, a station about thirty miles off, on the Jumoo Road, the road that runs through the cantonment. The order is given. The Grenadiers lead the way: then comes the long array of carriages, and the six companies of the 76th bring up the rear. They descend from the Ridge on to the Jumoo Road, this length of which constitutes, as we know, the Mall. The concourse of vehicles, of many different kinds, on the Mall, the local Rotten Row, of an evening, was one of the sights of the place; but never before had the Mall witnessed such a concourse as this. And now the cavalcade has reached the head of the road leading to the lines of the 76th and trailed slowly by it; but when the leading files of the 76th arrive at the opening they suddenly, and without any word of command given, wheel into it; and now with loud yells and cries the men of the 76th are rushing towards their lines in a disorderly mass, and all the efforts of their officers to stop them are fruitless. This desertion does not arrest, but rather accelerates the progress of the cavalcade, whose rear is so left defenceless. And now it has almost reached the cantonment boundary. The great imperial highway passes very near to the lines of the Grenadiers, and that nearness proves too much for them. They cannot go away and leave all their little belongings, their pots and pans, and bedding, and clothing, and little store of savings behind them. They follow the example of the 76th. They break their ranks and make a rush for the lines, and soon every individual man is inside his own separate hut. In vain does Colonel Grey, who has, of course, gone with them, cause the "assembly" to sound. The native officers beg of him and the other English officers to go away: they cannot get each sepoy out of his hut, and if they attempt to do so mischief may befall some of them—the regiment might be stained with some further and more

unforgivable crime: there are of course some evil characters in it.

There is indeed nothing further to be done. Most of the officers hasten after the retreating cavalcade in which are the wives and children of many of them. And the movements of the cavalcade had been still further accelerated by the defection of the Grenadiers. It has now no protectors at all, behind or before, in front or rear. The retreat has now become a flight. And in that flight took place many a curious, many a tragic, many a comic scene: in it was displayed many an act of heroic generosity, many an act of detestable selfishness. But with these we have nothing to do in the present narrative. None of those whose movements we have undertaken to follow went that way. For Colonel Grey does not mean to leave the station. If he cannot remain with his regiment he will remain near it. He determines to take up his quarters with his friend the Rajah Gunput Rao. But he must go first to the Campbells' bungalow. He has some documents and some cherished memorials there which he should like to take away with him. Just as he is approaching the Campbells' house he finds the Campbells themselves coming away from it. They had gone to it, intending to rejoin the retreating column afterwards, on an errand similar to his own, only to find it in the hands of a mob, which had almost taken their lives. It was only Campbell's good deeds that had saved them. Some of the crowd had stood forward in their defence. One of them, who had the gift of oratory so often to be found among the lower orders in India, and which finds exercise in the meetings of the Punchayuts, had exerted it in their behalf.

"You would not hurt the healer?" he had cried. "You would not wound the curer of wounds? You would not deprive the saver of life of life? You would not put to death one who has rescued so many of us from death?"

"No, never! That cannot be. We must do good to those who have done good to us. Assuredly Jan Cammill

Sahib and those belonging to him shall suffer no hurt at our hands." And he led the carriage out of the compound.

"They are plundering the house, they will destroy everything in it," says Dr. Campbell to Colonel Grey, in a strange, thick, husky voice.

The loss of one's house and furniture is not pleasant to any one—least of all, perhaps, to a Scotchman. And in this case the house and furniture were very valuable, and from the Campbells' long residence here both had come to form a part and portion of their lives, to enter into the texture of it, to an extent not usual with the nomadic Anglo-Indian. But it is not these things that affect John Campbell. It is the loss of his books, of his large collection of notes and memoranda, of his large botanical, and entomological, and other collections. This terrible and unexpected event robs him not only of the past but of the future. He had meant to devote the leisure of his years of retirement to the writing of books, for which these were to furnish the material. And now all that labour of collection had been in vain, and all those visions of future delightful labour and usefulness, and perchance fame, had vanished.

"I shall not go on to Nurnal, but remain here with the Rajah Gunput Rao. You had better come there too. Our troops from Abdoolapore are sure to be here to-night or to-morrow morning," says Grey.

"Yes," says Mrs. Campbell, looking apprehensively at her husband, who seems to be in a kind of daze.

They have reached the Ridge, and the emptiness of the road by the side of the flagstaff tower, which had been so crowded during all the past midday hours, strikes strangely upon their senses—seems to have a palpable presence. And now they have entered the Ajmere Road, on which the Rajah Gunput Rao's palace stands, and to their surprise—the reader will remember that it passed through a populous suburb near by here—find it, too, empty; but the city has to-day drawn all the surrounding population into it, as a whirlpool sucks in the surrounding

particles of water. They have reached the gateway of the Rajah's palace. Colonel Grey is not surprised to find the gate closed, but he is surprised to find that the men on guard refuse to open it to him.

"You know who I am?"

"Oh yes!"—in an off-hand and not the usually deferential manner. "But we have orders not to let any one in—more especially any Europeans."

"But I am the Rajah Sahib's friend!"

"Our orders are imperative."

"You will let him know that I am here?"

"Well, we will do that."

Then Grey has to remain for a long time standing before the gate; and then to ask them to send up to the house again; and then again. And the evening light is fading away; the cawing crows are flying overhead in flocks, making their way from the city to their distant roosting-grounds; night is at hand. At last the Rajah appears. He is closely followed by two attendants, who not only have sword by side and buckler on back, but carry matchlocks in their hands, while the Rajah himself has a brace of pistols conspicuous in his belt.

"What do you want?" he says rudely, and not hastening eagerly to shake hands, as he would have done yesterday.

"We have come to ask you to put us up for the night."

"I cannot put you up," says the Rajah, in the same rude tone of voice.

"Why not?" asks Grey, much surprised.

"*Meree khushi*" ("My pleasure"), says the Rajah grandly.

"And is this your friendship?"

"Friendship! What friendship?" says Gunput Rao scornfully.

"Your friendship toward me."

"I am a man of royal blood. I have friendship only with nobles and princes. But because of my favourable disposition toward you in past times—what you are

pleased to term my friendship—I will give you some good advice. Get away from here as fast as you can, and get down to Calcutta as fast as you can, and then take ship for England as fast as you can.”

“Why for?” (Grey was speaking Hindustanee.)

“Because your *raj*” (rule) “is now over, and ours re-established.”

It would be impossible to convey any idea of the tone of intense satisfaction with which these words are spoken. It is perhaps best, after all, that one nation should not conquer another.

“And I will give you a bit of friendly advice, too,” says Colonel Grey: “you had better get out of the Company’s territory, and hide yourself somewhere as fast as you can.”

He mounts his horse and they move on.

“We may as well keep to this road, and then cross over to the Jumoo Road by the Goorgaon cross-road,” says Grey. “It will be almost as short as going back, and more safe.”

And now they arrive at the edge of the huge barren plain over which Colonel Grey and Gunput Rao had ridden in friendly rivalry only so few days before. (They are to meet hereafter in far less friendly rivalry on the plains of Bundelkhund.) And now they enter on the level expanse; and now it seems to spread illimitably around them; and now they have reached its farther limit, and once more there are groves and hamlets around them. They are moving across a fertile tract where the lights still twinkle in the villages. And mile succeeds mile, and the road is even, straight and level, and the scenery of a precisely similar character. They have met very few people on the road, and now they meet none at all. It is the dead of night; the moon is riding straight overhead; she is speeding across the sky and they are moving slowly along the road; and so on across fertile tract and barren plain. Then the little mare who has brought them so far so gallantly breaks down suddenly, suddenly collapses altogether. The road is beautifully

smooth and level; but the carriage is low, and Dr. Campbell heavy, and the mare slightly built, and she has been in harness for nearly seventeen hours, out all day in the sun, and has not had her usual food or drink. She has now exerted herself almost to the bursting of her heart; she has given them her last ounce of strength; she can proceed now only at a hobbling walk. Dr. Campbell and Mrs. Campbell dismount and walk, Campbell leading the mare, the groom having disappeared. As they can proceed now only at a foot's pace, Grey too dismounts from his horse; he has been nearly twenty hours in the saddle. They wonder that they do not come to the Goorgaon cross-road: they have, in reality, passed it by without knowing it. The moon which was so radiant in the zenith now hangs pallid and wan in the western sky. And now the gray unbroken vault of heaven stands out distinct and clear; now it begins to brighten. The vast level fallow and the groves and trees and villages stand out in hard distinctness. Then suddenly groves and trees and villages disappear and cease and determine, and they are looking into vacancy. They have arrived at the edge of the great western desert, between which and the Himalayan wall lies the flat open tract between the Jumna and Sutlej, which forms the portal of the rich Gangetic valley, and the proximity to which, on a rocky elevation, was one of the things that gave Delhi, and Khizrabad with it, its importance. They move on into the sandy waste for a little way and then resolve to rest—they have nothing to fear in so lonely a spot. The men throw themselves on the ground and sleep there until the first rays of the sun come rushing over the land. Then they move on again. At last they have reached the cross-road, as they imagine, and turn into it. Their progress is now slower than ever, for the road is not a metalled one, but a mere earthen, or rather sandy, track. And the tyrant sun is bounding upward. The early morning rays of the sun are held to be very dangerous; they strike you under your hat, take you on an empty

stomach. There are very empty stomachs here; they feel sick and dizzy, but still they go toiling on. They arrive at a long stretch of sand-hills. The sharp crests and the long, smooth, softly-curving intervening hollows make it appear as if the flat sandy desert had been suddenly heaved up into billows. And the road, or track rather, goes straight up and down them, and at one of the rises the mare gives in altogether, and they have to unyoke her and abandon the carriage. The sun's rays grow more powerful every moment; the daily hot wind has begun to blow; the sand rises up in clouds to blind and choke them. The hot air now trembles and quivers and dances upon the surface of the earth as it does over the mouth of a furnace. The glare is awful. And what will the dust be when the wind has attained to greater strength? If the midday hours are terrible even in the midst of the cultivated grove and tree-covered tracts, what will they be here in the sandy desert? Then they rejoice as they see before them trees and a sheet of water, and press eagerly toward them, and find it a mirage. The little girl begins to flag and lag. Her father lifts her up and carries her, first on one shoulder and then on another, though he himself is moving with palpably uncertain, staggering steps.

"Put her down, John; you cannot carry her," cries Mrs. Campbell. "She is too heavy for you."

But he still persists in carrying her: now in his arms and pressed against his breast. The child puts her cheek against his cheek, and he presses her closer to his breast. Then Mrs. Campbell calls out to Colonel Grey who has been walking ahead,—

"Here is John will carry Helen when he is not able to."

"We'll put her on Musjid" (his charger); and they do so, and Dr. Campbell walks by the side of the good, noble Arab horse, with his arm behind the child, and he seems to rest a good deal of his weight on that arm. The heat increases even more, and the simoom blows in even more furious blasts, and raises up even denser clouds of dust.

At last they arrive at a long stretch of the thorny bushes which camels are brought to feed on, and they see the promontoried backs and small heads and long necks of some of those ungainly beasts looming up against the sky—and then they come on the men in charge of them. They find from them that they have gone astray altogether. This track leads to Powayn. Powayn is the name of the chief, in fact the only, town of a curious little oasis in the desert, a fertile island in the sea of sand, which forms an independent state, and is at present ruled over by the well-known Ranee of Powayn.

“How far is Powayn?”

“Five or six miles.”

“Would the Ranee Sahib give us shelter?”

“Most assuredly. Is not the fame of her beneficence spread throughout the universe?” He sincerely thought it was. “We are about to return with our camels. We will conduct you to the palace.” The big lumbering beasts are got together, and tied nose and tail, and then they set off. When they have passed out of the scrub they come to a stony track, where the heat is, if possible, still greater; and then the track winds between stony hillocks where the heat is even greater still. And then Colonel Grey and Mrs. Campbell utter a loud exclamation. Before them lies a shining lake, across the bottom of which extends the long buttressed wall or dam which holds the water up and gives the lake its existence; while at the top nestles a little stone-built city, and along either side are pretty temples, and bathing ghats, and rows of tall umbrageous trees. They feel as did the Israelites when coming out of the desert they first caught sight of the Promised Land.

“Send a man for some water,” says Campbell, in a thick muffled voice; “I cannot go any farther without some. I have such a pain in my back. I must sit down.”

And he seats himself in the ineffectual shadow of a neem tree growing near.

"What is the matter, John? You are not ill?" says Mrs. Campbell, seating herself by his side.

"I have such a pain in my back. I must lie down."

"You cannot lie down on the ground, it is so hot. Put your head on my lap."

"The child! the child! Call her; bring her!"

Colonel Grey lifts the little girl off the horse, and she runs forward and seats herself by her father's side. He casts one long, longing look at her; he lifts himself up and utters some uncomprehended words, and then lays himself down again—and is dead. And those three, whom we have seen so lively together, are now together stone still. A new and strange fear and awe has begun to arise within the child, but she has not as yet realized fully what has happened. And for the moment Mrs. Campbell is stricken dumb, petrified with grief and horror and surprise. She had seen that the exposure of the day before had affected her husband greatly, but she had never expected him to be thus struck down—he, the strong man. And then she gives way to her passionate grief; but, in her present weak condition, it is not so passionate as it will be hereafter. The aged, with their enfeebled powers, do not feel sorrow as do the young and strong; and, in the sick chamber, the pain and grief of those in full health by the side of the bed is greater than that of the exhausted sufferer passing away upon it.

Thus died John Campbell, the man of the strong brain and the gentle heart and the skilful hand; thus did his happy and useful and well-lived life come to an end.

The Ranee received and treated them with the utmost kindness. She expressed her deepest sympathy with Mrs. Campbell in her grief. Was she not herself a widow—a widow with an only child? though hers, thank Heaven, was a boy, and not a girl. Mrs. Campbell could not have met with greater kindness in the house of her own mother than she met with here. She departed hence deeply impressed with the fact that hearts as gentle and kindly may beat under the simple linen pap-upholders as under

the stiffer made and more elaborate corset; under brown skins as under white. And Colonel Grey reflects over the problem—so often presented to us in the history of India—of how women brought up in the confinement, physical and moral and mental, as it seems to us, of the zenana, should come to possess the qualities which enable them to rule the world around them, the world they have never seen. Here was a young woman who had passed from the seclusion of her father's house to the seclusion of her husband's, and who yet administered the affairs of her little kingdom with the utmost prudence and skill. The Ranee presses them to remain with her for a week—for a month; but Colonel Grey has now determined to go to Abdoolapore, the large military centre, and is anxious to get there at once. They bury John Campbell under a mango-tree by the side of the lake; and, two or three years afterwards, a large block of granite came from his native land to mark the spot. And then on Thursday morning—that is to say, about two o'clock in the morning—they start for Abdoolapore in the Ranee's palanquins, and guarded by her cavalry; and, resting during the heat of the day in the house of a zemindar, a connection of the Ranee's, they reach Abdoolapore late in the afternoon. Colonel Grey proceeds at once to the house of the Brigadier, in order to make his arrival known to him; Mrs. Campbell and the little girl being carried off to the late empty barrack, in which so many of the ladies of the station have now found a temporary home. The fat old gentleman receives Grey in his office—the room is a very cool one. Grey is the first man who has arrived from Khizrabad to give an account of all that had happened there—to give an account of those sad and terrible and memorable and historical events. He cannot but be excited in narrating them: but he produces no excitement in his listener. The old man's indifference is so great that Grey's indignation and disgust are swallowed up in astonishment. When Grey tells of the blowing up of the Arsenal, the old gentleman says it must have made a great noise!—that is all.

The only time he shows a little excitement is when Grey dwells, all the more strongly because of the old fellow's apathy, on the fact of the events of that day at Khizrabad having been governed by the continual expectation of the arrival of the English troops from here—Abdoolapore.

"Nonsense!" says the old man. "English troops cannot be sent out without tents and proper commissariat arrangements in such weather as this. They cannot be sent out under canvas at all. And I have to dress now, Grey; and you must send me an official report; and come and dine, and you can tell me more about it then."

As Grey jumps up angrily from his seat, he knocks over the waste-paper basket. As he is picking up the bits of paper from the floor and putting them back, one of them catches his eye.

"Why, this is Fane's handwriting."

"It is the bit of paper the spy had on him. He pretended it was English, and it is not."

"No; it is French."

"A filthy piece of Hindustanee paper. He must have thought me very green."

"May I read it, sir?"

"If you like—if you can. I must go now." And the old man, having risen from his chair with some difficulty, begins to toddle towards the door of the room.

"It is stated in this piece of paper," says Grey impressively, "that three English ladies and four English officers are in hiding not far from here, and ask for help."

"Nonsense, nonsense!" cries the old man—he had had his afternoon sleep, and was impatient for his evening drive. "A filthy piece of Hindustanee paper—chuck it back into the basket. Will see you at dinner."

"What has become, sir, of the man who brought the paper?"

"Is in confinement: is to be tried to-morrow by court-martial; will probably be hung. Most villainous-looking rascal."

"May I go and see him, sir?"

“Certainly, if you like; go at once,” says the old man, impatient to be rid of him.

Grey does go at once, and learns the particulars of the case from the young disciple, who has so nearly lost his life in carrying out his teacher’s commands. He gets back to the Brigadier’s house just as the old man has come back from his drive, and is having his usual glass of sherry and bitters, and states what he has heard; gives it as his opinion that the man is telling the truth, and that the paper has come from some fugitives from Khizrabad. He has no doubt that the handwriting is that of Fane, and the three ladies may be his wife and daughters.

“Very good, the handwriting is that of Fane; and yet you said that you thought that he must have been blown up in the Arsenal. Pooh-pooh! the fellow is lying; he looks a scoundrel. It is some dodge, some ruse.”

Grey’s proposition that a small body of troops should be sent out with the messenger to bring these English people in—at all events to see whether they are there or not—is met with a decided refusal. The Brigadier has not been able to send any troops out of the place, and is not able to do so now; for this unanswerable reason: if he sends out a force of such strength that it will satisfy him of its power to defend itself, then he will endanger the garrison here; and if he keeps a sufficient number of men in the garrison to make it secure, why then he cannot send out a force of such strength as will satisfy him of its power to defend itself. From that position nothing will move him. Grey’s arguments and remonstrances, carried far beyond the limits of military subordination, fare all in vain; and now dinner is announced. But Grey gets away immediately after it. He has heard that a number of the civilians of the place have formed themselves into a body of volunteer cavalry. He goes to the man in immediate command of it, and lays the case before him. Certainly, these English people must be at the faquir’s hut, and an effort must be made to bring them in. His volunteers will go out fast enough, but he must obtain the permission

of the "magistrate and collector" under whose supreme command the volunteers are. Certainly; the magistrate and collector is a man the very antipodes of the Brigadier, against whom he is furious; his own authority is paralyzed by the fat old man's supineness. Certainly; the volunteer cavalry shall go out, and he himself will accompany it with some of his mounted policemen. But all this has taken time, and it is not until about four o'clock in the morning that the little group of horsemen ride forth on their plucky mission.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE EIGHTH DAY—AND BEYOND.

THOSE on whose behalf the gallant little band had ridden forth had observed, in the early dawn of the morning, from the door of the hut, whose sacred character, which might or might not continue to be respected, formed their only protection, a mass of some kind appear on the level expanse of the open plain before them. What is it? A herd of cattle? No, it moves too high for that.

"It is a troop of horsemen," says Major Coote. But their eager eyes do not discern the well-known uniform of the crack cavalry regiment at Abdoolapore. Surely it cannot be another band of the Nuwâb's troopers. For now there is a sudden commotion among the men of the band already here, a sudden calling to one another and awakening of one another, and the leader shouts out, "Saddle, saddle!" and there is a quick saddling of the horses. Fane and Hay, looking out at the door of the hut, have to relate what is going on to the poor half-sick, half-stifled people within.

"Yes, they are horsemen, and coming from the direction of Abdoolapore."

"The fellows here are saddling and mounting."

In the East the horses of the sun gallop fast. The dim light over the plain has given place to a clear white brightness. The changes from light to darkness and from darkness to light at the end and beginning of the day are very swift. If in the evening it is like the sudden dropping of

a curtain, in the morning it is like the sudden raising of one. Or to go back to the original simile, which arose so naturally in the East, if the chariot goes rushing away from you very fast of an evening, it comes rushing toward you very fast of a morning. The light upon the plain is now vivid, quite sufficient for purposes of clearest vision: very soon it will be too much in excess for that.

"Feringhees!" shout the Nuwâb's horsemen.

"Oh! ah! haw!" says Major Fane, at the door of the hut.

"I thank thee, O my God!" Hay thinks that the fervent thanksgiving has risen up only in his heart; he does not know that he has uttered it aloud with his lips.

"I can see solah-hats. They are Englishmen," yells young Hamilton.

Mrs. Fane's thoughts and feelings have always been of a firm and clear and determinate character, but at this moment they are very much blurred and confused. For a very unmistakable English "hurrah!" has penetrated into the innermost recesses of the hut, and there is the sound of the galloping of horses, of the discharge of firearms. And Hay rushes out of the hut, and leaps over the little monkey-gods, who protect the faquir's hut as effectually as his tallest grenadiers guard the palace of the Czar, and Hamilton follows him. And what they see is the Nuwâb's horsemen galloping away and the other body of horsemen pursuing them. And then they see the latter returning, and Fane and Coote have joined them, and now there is a great interchange of cheers and then a great shaking of hands.

"You here, Grey!" cries Coote. "Did your fellows mutiny too?"

"Well, no—not quite. But we will talk about that another time. Why, we thought you were blown up with your Arsenal, Fane."

And then Mrs. Fane and her daughters are tenderly helped out. And the hearts of their rescuers are deeply moved within them, for they can see from their looks,

from the condition of their arms and necks and shoulders and faces, how terribly they must have suffered—see and know fully what I have been able but inadequately to describe or convey. They can see that it is torture to poor Lilian to put her blistered feet to the ground. She cannot now walk. They must get some means of conveyance for her. Some of them are thinking of riding back to a village they passed on the way to see if they can find a vehicle there, when a little cart is seen moving along the track. They take possession of this—requisition it. It is a miserable little springless cart, but still it must do. It certainly is torture sitting in it on the unmade track, but luckily they soon arrive at a smooth metalled road.

The rescued ones load the Byragee with thanks as they take leave of him, and they ask what they can do for him hereafter,

“Nothing,” says the holy man. “I have no desires—no wants.”

“But you have laid us all under such great obligation to you,” says Hay fervently, glancing towards Beatrice, “that we should like to be able to exhibit our gratitude in some way.”

“Nay,” says the Kabirpanthi, “the obligation is all on my side. You have afforded me the chance of saving seven most precious human lives. How can I repay you for that? I rejoice only to be able to assuage thirst. To save a human life—what honour, what glory, what joy!”

“But it would be a great pleasure to us to know in what way we could give you any pleasure,” says Hay earnestly.

“Well,” says the self-made recluse, “I see that in the months to come there will be much shedding of human blood. Alas! alas! If you will let one man live in my name I shall be amply repaid for all I have done for you.”

It can easily be imagined what a reception the fugitives met with from their fellow-countrymen in Abdoolapore. They were overwhelmed with offers of assistance. They had arrived in the place clothesless, homeless, penniless. Money; house accommodation, such as there is; clothes,

such as will fit them—are all soon at their command. It will be understood with what triumph and joy his fellow-countrymen welcomed Major Fane, who had done the great deed that was to stand out as one of the greatest deeds of the time. Congratulations and felicitations flow in upon him, so that his “oh! ah!” and “hah!” are in constant requisition. “Glad to see you, Fane,” says the fat old Brigadier. “Could not spare any troops to send out for you, but glad to see you. Come and dine.”

It will be understood with what grateful hearts they lay down to sleep that night, how fervent was Hay's thanksgiving ere he did so.

Our eighth day has ended. But we must go on a little further. The terrible exposure to the sun, and the privations and fatigue and anxiety she had undergone, threw Mrs. Fane into a fever from which she did not recover for a long while; and Lilian suffered greatly from her torn and cut feet, and could not stand on them for many months; and Beatrice nursed them both. And many others. Many of the English soldiers suffered from various illnesses during the terrible summer and autumn months, and many were wounded in excursions. (The old Brigadier soon applied for sick leave to the Hills, which was cheerfully granted him; and his successor was a very different kind of man.) And in every gathering of English women and children in Northern India then there was sure to be a daily increasing number of widows and orphans. And Beatrice Fane devoted herself to the assuagement of the bodily and mental sufferings of all. She tended the sick and wounded, she consoled the afflicted, the dying. With her slender, beautiful figure and her lovely face, her sweet voice, her tender, gentle ways, she seemed like some angelic being, and came to be called “the ministering angel.” Taking up too crowded a field of incident, I have not been able to make the characters properly known to the reader by their own speech as I should like to have done. Most especially do I regret this lost opportunity in the case of Beatrice Fane, with

her firm and strong, lofty and noble, and yet sweet and gentle character. Then Mrs. Fane and her daughters had to go through a long period of anxiety on their own account. Major Fane and Hay both went to Delhi to take part in its famous siege. (Hay's fears for the loss of his arm had not been unfounded. He had, in fact, run a close risk of losing his life; but medical help came in time, if only just in time, and his excellent unimpaired constitution enabled him soon to recover.) They both greatly distinguished themselves there. When the time came for the delivery of the final assault, and our batteries were being thrown up close under the walls, Fane especially distinguished himself by the coolness with which he, standing unconcerned in the midst of a storm of shell, directed the carrying on of the work in his battery, the furthest advanced and most important one—directed it with a bamboo stick, which was the successor of the Malacca cane, the loss of which represented the only personal damage he had sustained in the famous blowing-up of the Khizrabad magazine. Hay threw himself heart and soul into the fight. He was actuated, no doubt, like any one else, by a desire for personal distinction: he entertained no doubt, as was natural to one in his position, a strong resentment against the mutinous sepoys. But he threw himself with all his soul into the fight because he thought it was a righteous one. Each side, of course, thought its own cause a righteous one. But the sepoys had stained their cause with blood. The land rang with horrors. Their hands were red with the blood of women and children. He was fighting against the heathen; he was fighting on the side of the Cross. And so by next year Fane was Colonel Fane, V.C., C.B.; and Hay had made a still bigger jump and was Colonel Hay, V.C., C.B., and had command of one of the new crack Sikh infantry regiments.

And Hay, who had declared that he could not have his marriage deferred to the December of this year, had to wait until the December of next year. And he and

Beatrice Fane were married, as they would rather not have been, in the church at Khizrabad, for Colonel Fane was stationed there again. Perhaps elsewhere the marriage might have been a larger one. In the joy of her heart—the marriage satisfied her now in every way—Mrs. Fane might have insisted on its being a big, gay affair. But in a place so haunted by sad memories as this it could only be a very simple and quiet one. The “whole station” cannot be present at it, as would have been the case had it taken place, as intended, in the July of the preceding year. Besides the members of the family and Hay’s friend, who acts as best man—poor Philip Lennox was to have filled the post—there are only four or five other people, chiefly relations, present. And Lilian is the only bridesmaid who follows Beatrice Fane to the altar.

After lying under its walls for many weary, anxious months, the English force had carried Khizrabad by storm, and then came a day of reckoning for its inhabitants, a day of retribution for the denizens of the Devil’s Quarter. The streets did not run with blood, as they had on the occasion of many a previous sack, for the little force had not been able to make any sort of investment of the great city; had taken a whole day to effect a lodgment in it; and while it was slowly winning its way in from the Jumoo Gate, the one assaulted, the inhabitants had been fleeing forth from the other gateways. When this force had passed on, leaving only a small garrison behind, it was strange to wander through the silent and deserted city—to pass from empty and silent squares, once so thronged and bustling, into empty and silent streets; into silent and empty alleys; into private courtyards, now vacant, which seemed the very ultimate abode of silence, and where the sense of loneliness was most oppressive. It was strange to pass the long rows of deserted houses, in which no light now shone of an evening, and the sound of the grindstone was not heard of a morning. The dead bodies of men and animals lay about, and the cats who had fed on them had grown to a monstrous size.

How the members of the royal family fled from the palace-fortress and took refuge in a mausoleum without the town; how the Nuwâb delivered himself up with the whole of his family; how he was tried for life, are matters of history. There was no proof of the Nuwâb's connection with any of the deeds of butchery. The massacre in the palace was one of the crimes of which the fullest details had been obtained. Most of those concerned in it, including the ruffianly butcher, were captured—the search for them was very keen—and suffered the dreadful penalty of being blown away from guns. Some of them had said that they understood that the order for the massacre had come from the Nuwâb or the Sikunder Begum, but their testimony also went to show that it was the eunuch, Jhundoo Khan, who had actually hired them for the crime and paid them for it. And the eunuch had disappeared, and with him the forged warrant that might have cost the Nuwâb his life. The Sikunder Begum had been seen in her balcony, but her apartment overlooked the courtyard, and her presence there might have been accidental. The Nuwâb was stripped of all his titles and dignities, his income greatly reduced, and he and his family were transported from the banks of the Jumna, on which his ancestors had been seated for so many centuries, to the alien banks of the Irawaddy. The Sikunder Begum, of course, went with him. If the English officials, who felt a strong conviction that it was the Begum who had ordered the massacre in the palace, had obtained legal proof of her guilt, they could not have inflicted greater punishment upon her than this punishment did. They could not have ordered her solitary confinement for life and torture which that banishment entailed upon her. She had not undergone it for long, when she came to think that a violent, even an ignominious, death at Khizrabad would have been preferable. She had been delivered into the hands of her deadliest enemies; she had embittered the lives of the senior wives of the Nuwâb, and it was now their turn to embitter hers. She had supplanted

them. She had wounded their pride, their vanity. She had wounded them in their affections. She had humiliated them. And now she was cast down beneath their feet. They had now the power to torture her, and they used it to the utmost. Was it not she who had brought about the downfall of the ancient house of Khizrabad, of one of the great powers of the Faith? Was she not to be execrated of every one connected with that household, of every good Mohammedan? It was right and proper for them to entertain the bitterest hatred of her. Had she not caused this terrible change in the fortunes of them all? Had she not wrought their woe? Was it not she who had brought them to this—hither? Every trouble and inconvenience which they experienced by reason of the change of clime and fortune was charged upon her, and she was made to pay a penalty for it. Did a child die, of course because of the alien clime, its mother came and raved at the Sikunder Begum, and cursed her and reviled her. The wretched woman was delivered over entirely into the hands of her enemies and persecutors. To an appeal to the Nuwâb the answer came, not only that he could not see her, but that, as complete peace of mind was absolutely essential to his bodily health, he had been obliged to issue stringent orders that no communication from her should ever be brought to him, nor any mention ever made of her name; at the same time he sent her some neatly-turned verses, in which there was an enumeration of his misfortunes, which were all attributed to her, and an allusion to the danger of warming a viper in one's bosom was not forgotten.

And so reproach and execration, scorn and contumely, became the Begum's daily portion. There was now none so poor to do her reverence. The servants of the house could best show their regard for it by treating her with disrespect. The malignity of the whole place, of every person in it, found vent on her. No face was turned toward her with kindness. It was a terrible situation.

And the Begum felt her bodily discomforts and suffer-

ings as keenly as the laceration of her feelings. Very different these two meanly furnished rooms allotted to her and her children from her splendid suite of apartments in the palace of Khizrabad; very different this close room, with its coarse and scanty appointments—she felt that coarseness keenly—from the beautiful and airy chamber that had looked down on the valley of the Jumna and over many a league beyond; she felt stifled in this one—her helpless confinement in it caused her as much physical as mental suffering. She had been fond of good food and of pleasant drinks: her food now was poor of quality, such as was disagreeable to her and disagreed with her, undaintily served, often scanty in quantity; and if she complained of the water supplied her to drink she was told that it was she who had brought them here, to this terrible place, where the air and the water both were uncongenial and inimical to them all.

The Begum had loved luxury and ease. And now she had neither. The care of her children was left on her hands. The domestics rendered her, and hers, only grudging and insolent service. And the Begum was haunted by the memory, the torturing memory, not of any crime, but what to her was worse, of a failure. Most torturing must be the memory of some one single lapse or failure, moral or intellectual, or, as in her case, of some one unguarded-against event or circumstance, which renders nugatory the labour and forethought of years, and mars one's life. At Khizrabad she had thought that she made her own life unassailable. In her coffer lay a little packet, of a purposed littleness, which yet within its little compass contained that which gave her the command over fate and made her future secure. The gems within it would afford her the means of living in affluence, she and her children, wherever she went. She knew that, should that blow against the English fail, the Nuwâb's household would be no place for her. She would part from it and begin a new life elsewhere. On the day of the storm of Khizrabad she had urged on the defence, delayed

the flight from the palace to the latest. But the moment of the flight came. There came an hour of wild disorder and confusion. First, the Begum arranged for the departure of her children: there was a rush and scramble for the means of conveyance. Then she returned from that end of her secluded suite of apartments to her own special chamber. At the door she had met Hiria, the slave-girl, rushing away. "Stop! you black-faced witch," she had cried out to her, but the girl had only turned and given her a mocking look—how that look came to haunt her—and had fled headlong down the staircase. "The daughter of a pig!" the Begum had exclaimed. "How frightened they all are!" she had added contemptuously. Entering the beautiful chamber, she had passed round the dais to her strong box. She had uttered a cry—those were moments never to be forgotten—when she saw that its lid stood open. She had dashed her hands down into the chest, she had thrown out all that was in it, and then she had fallen back against the dais with a shriek—the precious packet was gone! Her hoarded power, her garnered security was gone. The slave-girl had stolen the packet. Never should she see it again; and never did she see it again. Foiled!—foiled by her whom she had so often called Fool—Dolt—Addle-pate—Donkey—Owl—Idiot! The idiot had taken ample revenge for all the sufferings the Begum had inflicted upon her. She had repaid torture with torture. When the Begum recalled that look, she could have yelled out in her rage and anguish.

The Begum lost her health and beauty. She became gaunt and haggard. Her cheeks became very hollow, and her fine aquiline nose stood out from her face like the beak of an eagle. She was tortured through that darling son whom she had hoped to place upon the throne of Khizrabad. He was still of an age that he had to pass most of his time within the limits of the zenana. It was made a hell to him. An English home is narrow enough for much misery. If within the closer confinement, the

cloistered retirement, of the zenana domestic happiness may rise to a celestial height, it is there that domestic misery may become of an infernal character. Every kind of torment was heaped upon the lad unsparingly, unrelentingly. His young life was made a burden to him. At last he said to his mother, "I cannot be happy until you are dead." Then she would die. So, one day, when the female attendants of the zenana heard the most agonizing shrieks and cries issuing from the Begum's apartment, and rushed into it, they found her writhing in the torments of the virulent poison she had swallowed. That eve, upon the coarse blanket of the mean bedstead, terribly twisted and contorted, lay the once beautiful form which we had seen stretched in luxurious ease and abandonment upon the costly coverlet of the silver-legged dais in the beautiful marble chamber of the palace of Khizrabad but a few years before.

The Nuwâb bewailed his lot in verses of many forms (and shapes)—surely the poets love to push the envenomed arrow home, to sip of the poisoned draught: they must find some satisfaction in the misfortunes which afford them the occasion for melodious mourning. But he grew fat and lived to an extreme old age.

We must go on a little further yet.

Thirty years have passed. The year 1887 dawns on British India even more gloriously than 1857. The January sun of 1857 had looked down on the dominions of the Honourable the East India Company. The January sun of 1887 looks down on the empire of Victoria, Queen of England and Empress of India. It looks down on a great empire greatly administered. It looks down on a changed and transformed India—on a new India. It looks down on great changes—great improvements, for great canals and railways now traverse the land; the railroad and telegraph have annulled its vast intervening distances. It looks down on fine new cities—on the old ones made sweeter and brighter. It looks down on innumerable schools and colleges—on a new generation of educated

natives: the stream of human learning which for so many generations had flowed backward and forward between Europe and Western Asia has now reached further from west to east and is flowing in full tide into India. It looks down on a people among whom has been an enormous diffusion of wealth—an enormous increase in the comforts of life. It looks down on a land in which peace and security, order and quiet, law and justice prevail in an eminent degree.

In Khizrabad the change that has taken place all over the land is epitomized. Not only great roads, but railways now radiate from it. The place of the old bridge of boats has been taken by a fine iron girder bridge, one of that splendid series of bridges which now span almost all the rivers in India—even the greatest, even the lower Indus, and even the Ganges at Benares. The foul back slums and fetid alleys have been opened out and cleansed. Improved sanitation has caused the complete disappearance of many loathsome and torturing diseases. Star Street glitters more brightly than ever—glitters with its own gay, bright, indigenous wares; for if once we inflicted injury on some of the handicraftsmen of India by the introduction of our own manufactures (which was greatly to the benefit of the rest of the community), we have long since recompensed it tenfold, for the handicraftsmen of that land have had such employment during the past twenty years as was never known there before.

The ancient splendour of the renowned castle or palace-fortress of Khizrabad has passed away with its ancient use: it is now occupied by a regiment of English soldiers. But be it remembered that it was solely owing to the English that the royal family of Khizrabad had been able to occupy the palace and retain it for its ancient use for the half-century preceding their final removal from it. Instead of the Nuwâbs, a municipal council, composed chiefly of natives, now governs Khizrabad. It holds its meetings in a splendid town hall, attached to which is a lofty clock-tower, since the completion of which the

old historical gong above the main gateway of the palace has ceased to ring forth the hours as it had done for so many hundred years before.

The Ghilâni Bagh has been greatly improved. You see natives strolling about in it as you did not do of yore, and in some of the finest equipages on the Mall you see natives sitting, though not yet with their wives.

And Khizrabad, as Delhi, has been affected by one great public change—a most important and historical change. We have said that the ancient importance of Khizrabad, as Delhi, was due to its standing at the highest point of the navigation of the Jumna, where a rocky ridge impinged on the river and allowed a strong fortress to be built; of its standing at one end of the flat open tract between the Sutlej and the Jumna, which was bounded by the stupendous wall of the Himalayas on one side and the wide wastes of the sandy desert on the other, and which formed the ancient portal or gateway into India. That portal has now been removed further westward; has been placed on the top of the great mountain chain that forms the western boundary of Hindustan.

The gun by the side of the flagstaff tower on the Ridge has sent forth its morning roar. The Hindus of the town are flocking down to the river to bathe. The English people are on the move, driving about on business or pleasure. The doctor goes to visit his patients, the engineer his works. The commanding officers of the various regiments—there are Sikh ones here now—and the brigadier, and the commissioner, and the civil surgeon, and the chaplain, and the manager of the bank, and the other prominent residents of the place are to be seen in the Ghilâni Bagh this morning, as we saw them on that morning in May thirty years ago. We pace the streets that others have paced before us and others will pace after us. Ghost follows ghost. And that corner of the gardens where the watercourse makes a beautiful sweep through the little wood of the ancestral banian tree, and where we saw the English girls assembled together that morning,

is still the place of favourite resort. We can note no change here except the typical one of an iron garden-seat having taken the place of the old wooden bench. There are two ladies on the seat. The young girl with the bright and blue-eyed face bears a strong resemblance to the Lilian Fane who formed one of that group of girls, as well she may, being indeed her daughter; and the pale but pretty middle-aged lady by her side is her mother, the Lilian Fane of old, but of course now Lilian Fane no longer. Her husband, Colonel Leslie, is now the Commissioner here—Khizrabad, like Delhi, was placed under the Punjâb Government after the Mutiny—and Mrs. Leslie now lives in Melvil Hall. And the daughter who is now with her (she has several others, two of them married; she is, in fact, a grandmother) arrived from England only two days ago, and though she has, of course, heard the story of her mother's escape from Khizrabad, she has not heard it yet in fullest detail from her mother's lips. And Mrs. Leslie tells it to her now, seated here in the shadow of the banian tree. She tells her how they were gathered together in this spot to settle the dresses they were to wear on the occasion of Aunt Beatrice's wedding, and how the cobra appeared and grandpapa killed it; and of the terrible day of the outbreak, and how they escaped to the Jumoo Gate, and how, seeing some of their own light summer dresses lying there on the ground, and picking one up, she saw under it the dead body of a young officer she knew very well and liked very much ("Poor fellow! he was only a boy: every one called him Tommy Walton: I can see his face now," says Mrs. Leslie with a shudder); and how they were let down the wall, and the difficulty they had in crossing the ditch, and all that happened afterwards; and how they wandered about for three days and underwent terrible sufferings; told her own part of the tale that I have told to you.

The events of that time are graven very deeply on the minds of all who witnessed them. Reviewing my own work, I think they are graven too deeply for the purposes

of fiction. You can manipulate fictitious events and characters as you will. You can make the events mould or bring out character, the character produce and bring about events. You can give the due proportion of space to the delineation of character or the narration of events. But in dealing with the real adventures of real people you are apt to forget that the characters of the actors are not as well known to the reader as to yourself, and every occurrence will insist upon being narrated exactly as it happened and at full length. You are apt to be overpowered with incident. The writer should dominate his events; but the events of the Indian Mutiny are sure to dominate the narrator. (We see this in every history of it as yet published.) But I have told the tale as best I could. Let the reader judge it leniently.

THE END.

NELSON'S LIBRARY.



A DESCRIPTIVE LIST.

THE WAGES OF SIN.

Lucas Malet.

The publication of "The Wages of Sin" brought "Lucas Malet" (Mrs. St. Leger Harrison) into the front rank of contemporary novelists. The *Guardian* wrote, on its appearance: "In reminding society that wages have to be paid by those who sin, and that those wages do not, as a rule, end with the sinner, Lucas Malet has given us a powerfully moral as well as a most striking and original novel."

"Undoubtedly one of the most powerful novels of the day."—

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In "An Adventurer of the North" Sir Gilbert Parker chronicles the last adventures of Pierre, that most whimsical and delightful of voyageurs. All lovers of good romance will appreciate this collection of tales, where the mystery of great spaces and far rivers is reproduced with a skill and a knowledge that in this special domain have never been equalled.

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WOODSIDE FARM. Mrs. W. K. Clifford.

A pleasant story of country life which ends as happily with marriage-bells as any old melodrama. The religious conflict between an austere Puritanism and a more broad-minded creed within one household has never been more reasonably and wisely portrayed. Mr. Garratt is probably the best "bounder" in modern fiction, and the heroine, Margaret Vincent, and her mother are in their different ways fresh and delightful studies.

"This fine story, so simple of outline, but so subtle in dealing with human hearts, and beautiful in the delineation of one woman's character."—WORLD.

THE OCTOPUS. Frank Norris.

Frank Norris, whose early death a few years ago deprived the English-speaking world of one of its most brilliant novelists, planned out a great trilogy of stories in which was to be told the epic of the wheat. The first dealt with its production in California; the second with its distribution, and more especially with the Chicago wheat pit; the third was to have for its subject its consumption as bread in some village in the Old World. The third, owing to his death, was never written, but the present volume represents the first of the trilogy. It tells with amazing vividness of the struggles of the wheat-grower, and more especially his war with the Railway Trust.

THE PIT. Frank Norris.

The second part of the great epic of the wheat. Like the author of "The Jungle," Frank Norris was a voice crying in the wilderness against tyranny and corruption; but he was first and foremost a brilliant story-teller. The romantic interest of his work is at least as strong as its moral and political significance.

In his recent volume of Essays, "Through the Magic Door," Sir A. Conan Doyle wrote:—"There was Frank Norris, a man who had in him, I think, the seeds of greatness more than almost any living writer. His 'Pit' seemed to me one of the finest American novels."

THE RECIPE FOR DIAMONDS.

C. J. Cutcliffe Hyne.

The creator of "Captain Kettle" and other picturesque heroes is beyond the reach of ordinary criticism. He has attained that vast public which knows little of most writers, but knows all about "Sherlock Holmes" and "Captain Kettle." Romance as simple and direct as Mr. Cutcliffe Hyne's appeals to every man who has a spice of adventure in his soul. Public interest has been roused by the Lemoine case in the Paris courts, where an inventor claimed to have discovered the art of making marketable diamonds. Mr. Cutcliffe Hyne's story tells of an older recipe—that of the astrologer Raymond Lully—which is engraved on the wall of a tomb in the Balearic Islands. How the recipe is found and lost is the theme of one of the most breathless of modern romances.

A LAME DOG'S DIARY.

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A book which has been hailed on all sides as the new *Cranford*. An officer, badly wounded at Magersfontein, goes to a country village to recover health, and in his convalescence has leisure to observe the little comedies of the place. No better picture of the humours of a narrow society has been done in our times, and the observation is as kindly as it is shrewd. Readers will find it not less delightful than *Christina M'Nab*.

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THE FORTUNE OF CHRISTINA M'NAB.

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"A masterpiece of its kind. It rivals, if it does not surpass, the most magical feats of Mr. Kipling's genius."—STAR.

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SIR JOHN CONSTANTINE.

"Q."

"Q." is a direct inheritor of the Stevenson tradition, and this is undoubtedly his finest work. It is a story of the eighteenth century in Corsica, and no more gallant and adventurous romance has been published in modern days.

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THE MAN FROM AMERICA.

Mrs. Henry de la Pasture.

This "sentimental comedy" tells of an old French vicomte who lives in Devon, of his grandchildren, and of how the "man from America," the son of a former comrade, appears as a providence to save his fortunes. Mrs. De la Pasture has few rivals in the delineation of the little worries and tragedies of social life.

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This study of the adventurer in politics bears a certain resemblance to the career of Lord Beaconsfield, and in the newly-awakened interest which is created by the approaching publication of that statesman's life, will no doubt attract many readers. It is a brilliant study of one type of political success.

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"A gay and enchanting story."—DAILY MAIL.

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THE GOD IN THE CAR.

Anthony Hope.

The study of an empire-builder. The main figure bears a resemblance in many details to the late Cecil Rhodes, and the contrast of the self-made man of deeds and the ordinary dweller in London society is one of Anthony Hope's most brilliant achievements.

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"A very remarkable book . . . brilliant but not superficial, well considered but not elaborated."—THE WORLD.

THE LADY OF THE BARGE. W. W. Jacobs.

This is the best collection of Mr. Jacobs's tales. The title story is an admirable specimen of his humour, and the book contains also *The Monkey's Paw*, which shows his mastery over the gruesome.

"His new volume, '*The Lady of the Barge*,' will assuredly not lessen his reputation. The first story, which gives its name to the volume, is an excellent bit of fooling; and in gruesome horror the story of '*The Monkey's Paw*,' a talisman which may grant three wishes, is singularly powerful. It is perhaps the gem of the volume; but all the stories are good, and the book is one to be commended and recommended."—ATHENÆUM.

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A romance of youth and love in a German forest district in the early years of last century. Like all the works of Mr. and Mrs. Castle, it is full of hope, spirit, and the poetry of adventure.

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A story of the great war with Napoleon. The scene is laid mainly in Devon, and since *Lorna Doone* there has been no better picture of the West Country and its people.

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W. E. Norris.

A story of a friendship, begun at school, between an unsuccessful solicitor and a duke. There is much in it which excels *My Friend Jim*, by the same author.

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Flora Annie Steel.

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This book has been universally acknowledged to be one of the most brilliant of modern social studies. The characters are in the main drawn from real personages; and apart from the dramatic interest of the story, much light is shed on certain aspects of modern political life.

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The love-story of a country doctor. No living writer excels Mr. Norris in depicting agreeable everyday people with sympathy and humour.

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Mr. Gissing has a unique place among our novelists. He is the great portrayer of the life of the respectable poor and the shabby genteel. His realism is never sordid, for it is always redeemed by a high moral purpose and an austere and conscientious art.

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This book, which first brought Mr. Whiteing into fame, is the most realistic and powerful of modern studies of slum life. Mr. Whiteing's realism, however, never jars, for he is an optimist at heart and always an artist.

LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET. (*Just Ready.*) Miss Braddon.

Miss Braddon's first, best, and most powerful story—a story that shares with “East Lynne” the distinction of being the most widely-read novel of modern times.

OWD BOB. *Next Volume—(Aug. 5.)*

Alfred Ollivant.

This is the saga of a dog, fully equal to Jack London's “White Fang,” and unequalled since “Rab and His Friends.” It is “a fine open-air, blood-stirring book, to be enjoyed by all to whom a dog is dear.”

THE DUENNA OF A GENIUS. (*Aug. 19.*)

M. E. Francis.

A charming tale of the struggles of two sisters, one of whom is a musical genius, and the other her faithful duenna. The story tells of the vain efforts of the genius to secure recognition, and of how the sister sacrifices on her behalf her own lover.

HIS HONOUR AND A LADY. (*Sept. 2.*)

Sarah Jeanette Duncan.

A story of high Indian politics, in which the great public servant, who knows no master but his conscience, is contrasted with the time-server, who succeeds where he falls, and steps into his shoes. The character of the Lieutenant-Governor is one of the finest modern studies of the best type of British administrator.

“An exceptionally clever novel.”—SPECTATOR.

MARCELLA. (Sept. 16.)

Mrs. Humphry Ward.

At a time when Socialism is in the air, this novel should be read with keen interest. In no other book has the character of the aristocrat who attempts to lead a Labour Party been so brilliantly and ruthlessly portrayed. But the main interest of the book is the character of Marcella herself—the beautiful, high-spirited girl who leaves her own class to devote her life to the service of the poor. It is not only a great novel, but a political study of profound subtlety and interest.

"All the characters are drawn with an ease, a masterly completion, of which there are few examples in England, and none but by hands of high renown."—PALL MALL GAZETTE.

"Beyond all dispute her best novel."—MANCHESTER GUARDIAN.

"Mrs. Ward at her strongest and best."—GLASGOW HERALD.

SELAH HARRISON. (Oct. 7.) Miss Macnaughtan.

This is Miss Macnaughtan's most ambitious novel. It is the study of a boy brought up in stern Calvinistic surroundings, who falls in love with a girl from a very different world. No modern study in religious temperament is more sympathetically and subtly done.

"It is rarely such a work of art in literature comes to cheer the soul of the reviewer."—THE WORLD.

"A remarkable book.....The story is so convincingly written as to seem less a romance than a narrative of actual facts."—

PUNCH.

"A story which tugs at your heart-strings."—THE STAR.

THE HOUSE WITH THE GREEN SHUTTERS.

(Oct. 21.)

George Douglas Brown.

The greatest Scottish novel since Stevenson, and the most faithful and dramatic portrait of village life since John Galt. It is the other side of the medal to which certain Arcadian pictures of rural Scotland are the face. The writer deals faithfully with the meanness and vice of a small country town; but his humanity never fails him. The book is the tragedy of a man who is too great for his environment, and who is in consequence narrowed and soured into tyranny. As a relief to the grim tale there are many chapters of delightful and idiomatic humour.

MRS. GALER'S BUSINESS. (Nov. 4.) W. Pett Ridge.

Mr. Pett Ridge is one of the shrewdest and sanest observers of the life of the lower classes, as he is also the most humorous. His sympathy never degenerates into false pathos, and there is always a bracing optimism behind his realism.

"Mr. Pett Ridge is seen here at his high-water mark."—

CHRISTIAN WORLD.

OLD GORGON GRAHAM. (Nov. 18.) G. H. Lorimer.

This is a pendant to the "Letters of a Self-Made Merchant," which may be taken as the gospel of the American business man, and which has had an unprecedented success in the United States and in this country. In the present book the father tells of the makings of his own fortune with much shrewd humour and wisdom.

"There is not a line in it to be neglected. The whole book is a fascinating stimulant."—MORNING LEADER.

"Brimful of worldly wisdom distilled in picturesquely sententious manner."—VANITY FAIR.

MAJOR VIGOUREUX. (Dec. 2.)

"Q."

A story of that Cornish sea-coast which "Q" has made classical. It is the study of a superannuated officer, who, in middle age, suddenly finds his romance. Since Colonel Newcome there has been no finer gentleman in fiction than Major Vigoureux.

"As charming a fairy tale of real life as a man may wish to read."—TRIBUNE.

"A fairy story of modern days, told with all the appearance of plain-sailing reality. And it brings back the salt savour of the sea, and the fresh scent of daffodils with a felicity that is all of the sunshine and of young life."—DAILY TELEGRAPH.

THE GATELESS BARRIER. (Dec. 16.) Lucas Malet.

A story of extraordinary and elusive charm, unlike any other of Lucas Malet's books, or indeed, any other English novel. It tells of a young man, married to a hard, fashionable woman, who wakes the ghost of a Georgian lady in an old manor. It is a book of the highest interest to all who are interested in psychical problems, and the grace of style and delicacy of imagination entitle it to rank as a classic.

"The workmanship arouses enthusiasm."—TIMES.

"It is books and books since this reviewer met a lady of such potent fascination as the fair ghost of 'Agnes Rivers.'"—

DAILY CHRONICLE.

"A daring, original thought has been worked out with unflinching success."—PUNCH.



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